



# **St Mark's Catholic Primary School**

## **Social Networking Policy For Staff**

### **Introduction**

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand engage and communicate with our audiences in new and exciting 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 duties to our School Community and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. 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 and Schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members as defined by School representatives.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- that St Mark's Catholic Primary School, its leaders and governors are not exposed to legal risks.
- that the reputation of St Mark's Catholic Primary School, staff and governors at the school are not adversely affected;
- all children are safeguarded.
- that any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of St Mark's Catholic Primary School.

### **Scope**

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by School Employees, Governors and/or Elected Members and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the School.

These groups are referred to collectively as 'School representatives' for the purpose of this policy. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school, Birmingham Archdiocese or local Authority related purpose and regardless of whether the

applications are hosted corporately or not. They must also be considered where School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Micro-blogging' applications. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, MSN, You Tube.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds. All School 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, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School and Local Authority Equality and Safeguarding Policies.

## **Use of Social Media in practice**

### **1. Personal use of social media**

- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the school community in any personal social media whilst in employment at St Mark's Catholic School
- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the DSL and procedures for Safeguarding followed
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above
- Members of the school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts
- Staff should not use personal mobile phones to make contact with members of the school community on school business, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.
- Staff are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account
- School Internet policy must be used at all times when children use ICT and access the internet in school.
- No personal photographs will be taken within the school environment

### **2. School-sanctioned use of social media**

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning. When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.
- The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate subject lead or member of the SLT before access is permitted for students.
- The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
- Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents / carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public.

## **Enforcement**

Any breach of the terms set out below could result in the application or offending content being removed in accordance with the published complaints procedure and the publishing rights of the responsible School representative being suspended.

The School, Archdiocese, and Local Authority reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by School representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the School or put it at risk of legal action.

Any communications or content you publish that causes damage to the School, Archdiocese and Local Authority, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the School Archdiocese and Local Authority Dismissal and Disciplinary Policies apply.

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 Local Authority 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.

**'Proudly and Joyfully we Love, Live and Learn as God's Children'**



**Related Documentation**

Complaints Procedure

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Equality Policy

Internet Policy in School Policy

Agreed by Governors at St Mark's Catholic School Primary School: September 2018

Policy Reviewed: July 2021

Next Review: July 2023