



Social Media Policy

September 2020

Europe

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) 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 You Tube, also have social media elements to them.
- 1.2 We recognise the benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and pupils are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around 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, volunteers and pupils.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy is subject to the following policies and pieces of legislation:
- Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Policy;
 - Digital Safety Policy;
 - Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (as applicable and as amended, extended or re-enacted from time to time), together the “Data Protection Legislation”; and
 - *For Spain only*, Spanish Honour and Own Image Protection (Spanish: *Ley Orgánica 1/1982, de 5 de mayo, de protección civil del derecho al honor, a la intimidad personal y familiar y a la propia imagen*).

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 anywhere;
 - Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education; and
 - Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.
- 2.2 The school respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school’s reputation are within the scope of this policy, even when communication is sent from a personal account.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 (i.e. on the profile description, see the Annex for example wording). Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- 2.5 Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- 2.6 Digital communications with pupils 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 (See 11.5)

3 Organisational Control

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1.1 SLT

- Facilitating training and guidance on social media use
- Developing and implementing this Social Media Policy
- 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
- Receive completed applications for social media accounts
- Approve account creation

3.1.2 Administrator / Moderator

- Be involved in monitoring the account
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

3.1.3 Staff

- Create the account following SLT approval
- Store account details, including passwords, securely
- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attend appropriate training
- Regular monitoring, updating and managing of the content he/she has posted via school accounts
- Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school (see the Annex)

4 Types of account

4.1 There are two types of social media account

4.1.1 **Personal account** – This personal account makes no reference to the school or school business.

4.1.2 **School account** – This school account is set up, managed and maintained by the members of staff; it is often used by multiple members of the same department, e.g. @'HistoryDept', or the whole school, e.g. @'School'.

4.2 Anyone wishing to create a school account must seek permission from the Headteacher. The content of everything in that account should be of a professional standard.

4.3 The Headteacher must be satisfied that anyone running a school sponsored social media account endorsed by 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.

5 Monitoring

5.1 **School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently.** Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend), even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

6 Behaviour

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 **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.
- 6.3 Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts in relation to school activity are not acceptable.
- 6.4 If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must follow this policy before responding.
- 6.5 Unacceptable conduct (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of Data Protection Legislation or image rights (Spain only), confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of this policy and may take action according to the Disciplinary 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.

7 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- 7.2 Users must ensure that their use of social media does not breach confidentiality or Data Protection Legislation.
- 7.3 Users in Spain must ensure that their use of photos on social media is in accordance with the Spanish Honour and Own Image Protection Act.
- 7.4 Users must not post defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content.

8 Handling Abuse

- 8.1 When acting on behalf of the school, offensive comments should be handled swiftly and with sensitivity.
- 8.2 If a conversation becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.
- 8.3 If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

9 Tone

- 9.1 The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:
- Engaging
 - Conversational
 - Informative
 - Friendly

10 Use of images

- 10.1 School use of images on a school's social media pages can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are adhered to.
- 10.1.1 Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's Digital Safety Policy.
- 10.1.2 In order to use images of pupils, consent should be sought via the Photo Consent Form. If the child is under the age of 18, a parent / guardian will need to provide consent on behalf of the pupil. This consent can be withdrawn at any time.
- 10.1.3 Staff should not use a personal device to take photographs of students.
- 10.1.4 Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Pupils 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.
- 10.1.5 If a member of staff inadvertently takes a picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

11 Personal Use

Staff

- 11.1 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 (see the Annex). Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- 11.2 Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- 11.3 Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- 11.4 The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.
- 11.5 Cognita employees should not engage on social media on their personal device whilst teaching or on duty with students.

Pupils

- 11.6 Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils of the school on any personal social media network account.

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11.7 The school's education programme should enable pupils to be safe and responsible users of social media.

11.8 Pupils are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's Behaviour Policy

Parents

11.9 If parents have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.

11.10 Parents are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's Complaint Procedure.

12 Monitoring posts about the school

12.1 As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the internet for public postings about the school.

12.2 The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process. This is undertaken on a school by school basis and is ultimately within the remit of the Headteacher.

Annex: Good Practice Guide

Managing your personal use of social media:

- Nothing on social media is truly private
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don't use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy
- Be aware of your digital footprint
- Keep your personal information private
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online, consider: Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post
- If you want to criticise, do it politely
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would pupils or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem

Managing school social media accounts:

The Dos

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views (see below)
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting process
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts

The Don'ts

- Make comments, post content or links to materials that will bring the school into disrepute
- Publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Breach copyright
- Link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content
- Post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Use social media to air internal grievances

Disclaimer text:

"The views expressed from this [profile / account] are made on behalf of myself only and do not necessarily reflect the views, beliefs or opinions of anyone other than me."

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DOs and DON'Ts When Sharing on Social Media

DOs

Share students working



Showcase student work



Celebrate inspiring colleagues at school and beyond

DON'Ts

Don't obscure faces with Emojis and Graphics



When in doubt, keep the photo out!

INSTEAD

Don't include children's names in posts to your personal Twitter accounts



Have your school's official account share the post – with parental permission assured

INSTEAD

Don't include close-up photos of children in posts to your personal Twitter account



Shoot photos from behind or above – featuring students but not in an identifiable way

INSTEAD



Use #CognitaWay to connect and share with other teachers across the Cognita world

Social Media Policy

Ownership and consultation	
Document sponsor (role)	Director of Education
Document author (name)	Andy Perryer – Digital Learning Adviser
Consultation	Safeguarding Team Legal Team Education Team Communications Team

Audience	
Audience	All school based staff

Document application and publication	
England	Yes
Wales	Yes
Spain	Yes

Version control	
Implementation date	01.09.2020
Review date	01.09.2021