



# Learn to Live Federation

## Social Media Policy

*\*In the context of this policy “everyone” refers to members of staff, governors, Friends and anyone working in a voluntary capacity within the federation.*

### **Introduction**

Social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging (writing personal journals to publicly accessible internet pages), involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace or Bebo and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation’s reputation or image. In addition, the Learn to Live Federation has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

### **Rationale**

The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate 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, the community, 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 whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff across the federation.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the federation from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected
- Further safeguard and protect all children and staff
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school
- To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, governors, friends and volunteers of the Learn to Live Federation with respect to social networking.



## **Definitions and Scope**

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper sites.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All members of staff 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's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.

Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media

## **Key Principles**

- Everyone\* in the Learn to Live Federation has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the federation, and to treat colleagues and members of the federation with professionalism and respect.
- It is important to protect everyone\* in the Learn to Live Federation from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone\* in the Learn to Live Federation considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school. Anyone working in the federation either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.

## **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 in the Learn to Live Federation.
- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated safeguarding officer



- 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 school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts
- All email communication between staff and members of the federation community on school business must be made from an official school email account
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the federation 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 federation and members of its community on any social media accounts
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the federation in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts
- Staff should not accept any current pupil or any ex-pupil of the school as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account

## **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 Network Manager 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
- All social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the About or Info page to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the school website. This will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by the Learn to Live Federation.



### **3. Code of Conduct for Everyone\* in the Learn to Live Federation**

The following are **not considered acceptable** in the Learn to Live Federation:

- The use of the school's or federation's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Head teacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which links the federation to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the federation. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the federation.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the federation whilst engaged in school activities without the consent of a member of SLT.

**In addition to the above everyone\* in the Learn to Live Federation must ensure that they:**

- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the federation.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal/professional reputation, or the federation's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.

#### **Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.
- The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the federation's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.