South Farnham Educational Trust

The Continual Pursuit of Excellence

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

REVIEW DATE:	SUMMER 2026
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	SUMMER 2028

Introduction & Purpose

Social media 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 have social media elements to them. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Google+, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and all other social networking sites, internet postings, blogs and chat apps. It applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our school in any way.

Definition of social media

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp.

South Farnham Educational Trust recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. 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 all school stakeholders, including, employees, governors. parents and pupils.

Policy Statement

South Farnham Educational Trust:

- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education.
- 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.
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.
- 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.

All members of the school should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

Professional Communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school's name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal Communications are those made via a 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. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy. Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Roles & Responsibilities

Headteacher:

- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
- Developing and implementing the 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.
- Approve account creation and approve all posts prior to going live.

Nominated Social Media Administrator / Moderator

- Create the account following SLT approval.
- Store account details, including passwords securely.
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account.
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

Staff

Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.

- Attending appropriate training.

Process for Creating New Accounts

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department X account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page.

The school must consider the following factors before discussing the creation of social media accounts with the headteacher:

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Will the account be open or private/closed

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). 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 bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Behaviour

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.

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.

Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, 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.

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.

The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media 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, and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Staff must make themselves aware of and act in accordance with their duties under the Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges as these relate to:

- Their own on-line activity
- The on-line activity of students and other colleagues
- Information of which they become aware on-line including their duties relating to Children Missing from Education, Child Sexual Exploitation, FGM and Preventing Radicalisation (Prevent

Legal Considerations

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.

Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

When acting on behalf of the school, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.

If a conversation turns and 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.

If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Tone

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 (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.

Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts.

Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students 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.

If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

Please note: while we recommend members of staff make their private social media profiles unidentifiable to pupils, we understand many staff will use sites such as X (formerly Twitter) or LinkedIn for professional purposes. It's up to you to decide what is acceptable use for your staff and to amend this section accordingly.

The Trust expects all staff (including Trustees, Governors & Volunteers governors and volunteers) to consider the safety of pupils and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

When using social media, staff **must not**:

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate with, pupils past or present
- Complain about the school, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of pupils
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school
- Link their social media profile to their work email account
- Use personal social media during timetabled teaching time

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff behaviour policy.

Any communication received from current pupils (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should not also do not have contact via personal accounts with past pupils (if ongoing communication is required, this should be using via official school channels).

Breach of the terms of use stated in this policy or any inappropriate use of social networking sites and applications by staff will be dealt with through the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

Pupil/Students

No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from Facebook.

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

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

Pupils/students 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.

No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day

All pupil must follow the Behaviour Policy with regard to use of mobile phones.

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 Headteacher. Parents will be informed if this happens

No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day unless for direct school use (posting school information of the school Facebook page.)

Parents/Carers

The school has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.

Parents/Carers 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/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures.

WhatsApp groups

We expect parents/carers to follow the above social media guidelines when using class WhatsApp groups.

Monitoring Posts About the School

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

The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.