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## HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

### ONLINE ACTIVITY & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Person Responsible: GB Committee  
Date Adopted: April 2015  
Date of last review: Summer 2025  
Date of next review: Spring 2026

#### 1. POLICY LINKS

- ICT Acceptable Use Policy for staff.
- ICT Acceptable Use rules for parents and students.
- Child Protection - Safeguarding Policy.
- E-safety Policy.
- ICT Policy.

#### 2. RATIONALE

- This policy is aimed at protecting both staff and students from the risks associated with the use of social networking sites & other activities on the internet.
- The policy builds upon government guidance, to reflect the need to raise awareness of the safety issues associated with electronic communications as a whole.
- It advises staff and governors on procedures which should be used when dealing with inappropriate or potentially inappropriate use of social networking sites.
- This policy aims to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice and covers the use of social networking by all school stakeholders.
- The reach of social media is vast, and the internet *never forgets*. Anything and everything published can be seen across the world for an uncontrollable amount of time so it is critical as a responsible organisation that we ensure that the image of the school is always presented as we would wish it to be and that at every stage, all our governors, staff, parents, students, stakeholders, suppliers and local residents whether current or prospective are treated with proper consideration.
- HVS recognises that there is considerable scope for the boundaries between the use of social media in professional and personal lives to become blurred and it is important that

any personal use of social media is in line with the school's social media policy where an individual is identifiable as an employee or representative of the school.

### **3. AIMS**

- To assist all staff working with students to work safely and responsibly with the internet and other communication technologies and to monitor their own standards and practice.
- To set clear expectations, to staff, governors and students, of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social networking for educational, personal or recreational use.
- To support safer working practices.
- To reduce occurrences of positions of trust being abused or misused.
- To minimise the risk of allegations being made against adults who work with students.
- To give a clear message, to staff, governors and students, that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken.
- To ensure the school's image and public reputation is protected and not brought into disrepute through posts and comments on social media

### **4. SOCIAL MEDIA**

- The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new 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 personal and professional reputation, as well as the reputation of our school.
- We will strive to ensure that staff and governors are kept fully aware of risks and issues that may arise with social networking applications and the ways in which these risks can be minimised.

### **5. SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS**

These include but are not limited to:

- Blogging.
- Social media public posting services, such as Facebook.
- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com.
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube.
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter.
- Instant messaging services, for example WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Signal.

- Photo or video sharing, for example Instagram.
- The School and Sixth Form have various social media accounts controlled by carefully selected members of staff reporting directly to the Head of Sixth Form and Head Teacher. Content is curated in line with clear direction from these Senior Leaders.

## **6. TERMS OF USE**

Staff should:

- Take personal responsibility for the content you publish online. Common sense and being clearly within the boundaries of taste and decency should be at the forefront of your mind when posting anything. If you are at all unsure about the suitability of anything to be posted, you should contact the Head Teacher directly.
- Use the School's social media channels positively to promote the School, its activities and its achievements; as well as communicate any essential or useful information to all external stakeholders. Essential information will be communicated by email for parents who do not have access to Twitter.
- Never use social media negatively to denigrate, criticise or insult anybody or anything associated with school, even indirectly.
- Not use social networking applications in work time for personal use.
- Regularly review your social networking settings to ensure privacy settings are appropriate and that information available publicly is accurate and appropriate. This also includes photos that may cause embarrassment to yourselves and the school.
- Ensure that your profile/posts and any personal information is kept private to 'friends' where possible.
- Take extra precaution when posting online, including photos, comments and posts which could be misconstrued by others and reflect in an unprofessional manner on the individual or school.
- Not accept current or ex-students as 'friends' or parents of the students at the School on social networking sites, until those students have left the school and reached adulthood, so that you as a teacher cannot be deemed to be in a position of trust, or responsibility for them.
- Ensure that if your communication is fully public (e.g. blogs/Twitter), that you maintain your professionalism at all times and remember that you are a representative of the school.
- Be aware that electronic texts, comments and even forwarded-on messages (such as retweets) can sometimes be misinterpreted or misconstrued so should endeavour to minimise the possibility of this happening.
- Not use social media to discuss confidential information, discuss specific students. staff or discuss the school in any context
- Not use personal social media accounts to post any photographs containing students from the school at any time, or containing staff from the school (without their explicit permission).
- Check with the IT Support if you need advice on checking your security settings or monitoring your online persona.

- Always inform the Head Teacher if a student attempts to join a staff member's area on networking sites.
- At all times adhere to the rules regarding copyright. You should not quote other people's work or content without their permission and if such permission is granted ensure that the original author is credited.
- Never comment or give information on an emergency situation/incident in progress or that has been concluded.
- Never take a stance on any of the following topics without explicit authorisation from the Head Teacher: Education Policy, Religion, Politics, Sexuality, Ethnicity and Health.
- Bring any mistakes to the attention of the Head Teacher immediately. You should delete the mistake and then seek advice as to the best course of action.
- Carefully consider what personal details are available for yourself online, either on social media or elsewhere and limit wherever possible. It is commonplace for personal details to be used for Social Engineering. Social engineering is a manipulation technique that exploits human error to gain access to private and confidential information.

We do recognise that some staff members have friends within the local community, including parents, and ask that staff are extra vigilant if they are *friends* with parents on social networking sites.

Students should:

- Not be signed up to any social networking site where they do not meet the age criteria for the site.
- Not engage in any online activity that could be construed as cyber-bullying (refer to the e-Safety policy and the Anti-Bullying policy).
- Not produce posts about staff that could be considered a defamation of character or Libel.

We do recognise that students under the age of 13 may be signed up to social networking sites where the minimum age is 13 either with or without parental knowledge. As a school, access to social media sites such as Facebook, though the HVS network or Wi-Fi is blocked. We also ensure it is part of our e-safety teaching. We will also endeavour to ensure that parents are aware of how to minimise any risk to their children if they are using these sites at our annual Fast Forward session for parents and advice available on our website. As a school, we reserve the right to contact sites such as Facebook and ask them to remove our student's accounts should any issues, such as cyber-bullying, occur.

Where, as a governor, you are clearly identified individually with the school you should:

- Regularly review your social networking settings to ensure privacy settings are appropriate and that information available publicly is accurate and appropriate. This also includes photos that may cause a damage of reputation to the school.

- Ensure that your profile/posts and any personal information are kept private to 'friends' where possible.
- Take personal responsibility for the content published on social media. Common sense and being clearly within the boundaries of taste and decency should be upfront in your mind when posting anything. If you are at all unsure about the suitability of anything to be posted, you should contact the Chair of Governors directly.
- Take extra precaution when posting online, including photos, comments and posts which could be misconstrued by others and reflect in an unprofessional manner on the individual, other governors or the school.
- Use social media positively to promote the School, its activities and its achievements as well as communicate any essential or useful information to parents, prospective parents, students or the local community, and ideally through the school's official social media accounts. It should never be used negatively to denigrate, criticise or insult anybody or anything and you should be respectful at all times.
- Ensure that if your communication is fully public (e.g. blogs/Twitter), that they maintain their professionalism at all times and remember that they may be viewed as a representative of the school.
- Be aware that electronic texts, comments and even forwarded-on messages (such as retweets) can sometimes be misinterpreted or misconstrued so should endeavour to minimise the possibility of this happening.
- Not use social media to discuss confidential information, discuss specific students or discuss the operational details of the school, and never name individual students.
- Not use social media to post any photographs containing students from the school at any time, or containing staff from the school (without their explicit permission).
- Not represent yourself as speaking on behalf of the school unless explicitly authorised to do so by the Chair of Governors.
- At all times adhere to the rules regarding copyright. You should not quote other people's work or content without their permission and if such permission is granted ensure that the original author is credited.
- Never comment or give information on an emergency situation/incident in progress or that has been concluded.
- Never, in your role as a governor identifiable with the school, take a stance on any of the following topics without explicit authorisation from the Chair of Governors: Education Policy, Religion, Politics, Sexuality, Ethnicity and Health.
- Bring any mistakes to the attention of the Chair of Governors immediately. You should delete the mistake and then seek advice as to the best course of action.
- Carefully consider what personal details are available for yourself online, either on social media or elsewhere and limit wherever possible. It is commonplace for personal details

to be used for *Social Engineering*. Social engineering is a manipulation technique that exploits human error to gain access to private information.

We do recognise that some governors have friends within the local community, including parents, and ask that governors are extra vigilant if they are *friends* with parents or prospective parents on social networking sites.

Parents / Carers are expected to:

Sign the home / school agreement at their induction meeting which explicitly states that they will:

Work alongside the School to ensure it is a safe and happy environment for all young people and adults to learn and work in. Represent the school positively and fairly in the community and online. Ensure your child's high attendance and excellent punctuality so no learning time is wasted.