HUMAN RESOURCES
SCHOOL MODEL POLICY & PROCEDURE

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

CONTENTS

1.0   POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the School's recommendations and requirements for the use of social networking media by its employees. In doing so, the School seeks to achieve an appropriate balance in the use of social networks by staff as private individuals, but also as employees and educators, with professional reputations and careers to maintain, and contractual and legislative requirements to adhere to.

Whilst the School does not wish to discourage staff from using such sites on the Internet in their personal time, it does expect certain standards of conduct to be observed in order to protect the School and its reputation, and also to protect staff from the dangers of inappropriate use.

<u>Accessing social networking sites in working time and/or from School ICT equipment is strictly forbidden, whether the equipment is used at home or at school.</u>

1.1   Eligibility

This policy largely relates to the use of social networking applications by School staff in their own personal time, using their own ICT equipment. This is because using the School's equipment and/or network to access such sites is prohibited.

The term 'employee' or 'staff' covers all employees/staff of the School, including casual staff and agency employees. Where individuals from partner organisations are involved in acting on behalf of the School, they will also be expected to comply with this Policy.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Social Networking (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Bebo)
- Media sharing services, for example You Tube
- Micro-blogging applications (e.g. Twitter, Yammer, FMyLife)
- Online discussion forums and opinion sites (e.g. Ning)
- Blogs (e.g. Blogger, LiveJournal, Xanga)

1.2   Exceptions

This policy specifically addresses the use of social networking sites by school staff. Pupil use of these sites using the school network is covered in separate guidance. Employees / Staff where these are used for educational purposes are also exempt.

1.3   Responsibility & Accountability

Head Teachers/Managers:
- Should ensure that all existing and new staff are familiar with this policy and its relationship to the School's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT.
- Should provide opportunities to discuss appropriate social networking use by staff on a regular basis, and ensure that any queries raised are resolved swiftly.
- Must ensure that any allegations raised in respect of access to social networking sites are investigated promptly and appropriately, in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Procedure and Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Rules.

Employees:
- Should ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this policy and its relationship to the School's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT.
- Should raise any queries or areas of concern they have relating to the use of social networking sites and interpretation of this Policy, with their line manager in the first instance.
- Must comply with this policy where specific activities/conduct are prohibited.

HR/Payroll:
- Will advise and support head teachers and line managers on the application of this Policy.

Governors:
- Will review this policy and its application on an annual basis.
- Should ensure that their own conduct is in line with that expected of staff, as outlined in this policy.

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS & REQUIREMENTS FOR THE USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Working in an educational setting with young people, staff have a professional image to uphold, and how individuals conduct themselves online, helps to determine this image.

2.1   Friends/Befriending:

One of the functions of social networks is the ability to "friend" others, creating a group of individuals who share personal news and /or interests. The School strongly advises against staff initiating or accepting invitations to "friend" pupils, or pupil's family members/friends. However, there may be exceptions e.g. family members where a pupil is related to a member of staff.

Staff who maintain social networking friendships, are required to adhere to the requirements below relating to content of interactions.

2.2   Content of interactions:

Staff are recommended to refrain from making reference on social networking sites to the School, its employees, pupils, and their families. If staff adhere to this recommendation then the personal content of an individual's social networking memberships is unlikely to be of concern to the School.

An exception to the above would be content which details conduct outside of employment which affects the individual's suitability to perform his/her work, makes him/her liable to be unacceptable to other staff or management, or is liable to damage the School's reputation.

If employment at the School is referred to, then the information posted would need to comply with the conditions set out below.

- Any references made to the School, its employees, pupils and their families, should comply with the School's policies on conduct/misconduct, equal opportunities, and bullying and harassment.

- Staff must not post information on a social networking site which is confidential to the School, its employees, its pupils or their families.

- Staff must not post entries onto social networking sites which are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive in any way, or which have the potential to bring the School into disrepute.

- Staff should not use the School logo on their own personal social networking accounts, and should not post any photographic images that include pupils.

- When posting any information onto a social networking site, staff are recommended to consider whether any entry they make puts their effectiveness to perform their normal duties at risk.

- If individuals feel aggrieved about some aspect of their work or employment, there are appropriate informal and formal avenues, internally within the School, which allow staff to raise and progress such matters. Social networks are not the appropriate forum to raise such matters. Employees should discuss any concerns with their head teacher/line manager in the first instance. Guidance is also available from HR/Payroll and trade unions.

Where staff use educational/professional networking sites as a professional resource, which are not available to the general public; it is acceptable to make reference to the school. The above conditions relating to content of postings/communications will still apply.

2.3   Security

Staff are advised to check their security profiles and privacy settings on the social networks that they use. If individuals are not clear about how to restrict access to their content, they should regard all content as publicly available and act accordingly.

In using social networking sites, staff are recommended to only post content that they would wish to be in the public domain. Even if content is subsequently removed from a site it may remain available and accessible. Staff should consider not only how content could reflect on them, but also on their professionalism and the reputation of the School as their employer.

Even with privacy settings in place it is still possible that the personal details of staff may be accessed more broadly than the other networkers identified by them. Any reference to such information by pupils and/or their families, which a staff member deems to be inappropriate or is concerned about, should be reported to their line manager in the first instance.

If a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil (or group of pupils) has made inappropriate/insulting/threatening comments about them, or other staff members, on a social networking site; then they must report this to the head teacher so that the appropriate process can be followed.

2.4   Policy Breaches:

Staff found to be in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure and the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Rules, with potential sanctions up to and including dismissal.

Information shared through social networking sites, even on private spaces, is subject to copyright, data protection, freedom of information, equality, safeguarding and other legislation.

Where staff work in roles that are governed by professional bodies/professional codes of conduct; the professional rules relating to social networking applied to them may be more stringent that those within this Policy.