

WALFORD NURSERY & PRIMARY SCHOOL



POLICY

for

SOCIAL MEDIA

Reviewed: Summer 2025

Date for Review: Summer 2026

Policy for Social Media

Walford Nursery & Primary School is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking applications such as Facebook and Twitter. 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 whilst considering the potential impact on the reputation of the school.

This policy provides pupils and staff with guidance around the use of social media and advises leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking applications. For example, the use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The school recognises and embraces the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. Whilst employees are encouraged to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media, they should also be aware that there are some associated risks, especially around issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation.

This policy aims to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide social media guidance to staff, pupils, parents and carers on social media usage;
- ensure the school is not exposed to legal risks arising from social media usage;
- ensure the reputation of the school is not adversely affected from social media usage;
- ensure users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

Definition of Social Media

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. It allows people to share information, ideas and views. Examples of social media include: blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Myspace, Flickr and YouTube, etc.

Legislation

Acceptable use of social networking must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the school will adhere to its rights, responsibilities and duties in accordance with the following:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

The internet is a fast-moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media – the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium. When using social media, staff should be aware of the potential impact on themselves and the employer, whether for work-related or personal use; whether during working hours or otherwise; or whether social media is accessed using the employer's equipment or using the employee's equipment. Staff should use discretion and common sense when engaging in online communication.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all stakeholders of Walford Nursery & Primary School, including employees, governors, pupils and volunteers. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives'.

This policy applies to all uses of social networking applications used for school related purposes. It applies regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications or otherwise. This policy also applies to internally facing uses.

Social networking applications include but are not limited to:

- Blogs, for example, Blogger
- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com
- Collaborative spaces, for example, Facebook
- Media sharing services, for example, YouTube
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example, Twitter

Some social networking applications are targeted at older teenagers and adults. For example, Facebook has a 'no under 13' registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds. This means pupils should not have a registered Facebook account.

Social Networking Applications as part of the School Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteacher first. Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school service (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within this policy.

Where social networking applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The school expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with the following Terms of Use.

Terms of Use

All school representatives must adhere to the following:

- must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school Codes of Conduct, Teacher's Standards or policies;

- must not be used to discuss or advise on any matters relating to school or school representatives;
- references should not be made to any off-site school activity or event, before it has taken place, unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Headteacher.

Leaders are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media;
- operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

Guidance for Staff using Social Networking Applications:

- Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher.
- Staff should not interact with any pupil of a parent/carer in the school on social networking applications.
- Staff should not interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social networking applications, where the pupil is under the age of 18.
- Staff should not request access to a pupil's area on any social networking applications or permit pupil access to any staff members' area, e.g., by accepting friend requests.
- Staff that have family and friends with pupils in school may interact using social networking applications.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- If a member of staff has evidence of pupils or adults using social networking applications inappropriately in the working day, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the school or detrimentally affects the school's reputation then disciplinary action may be taken.
- Staff should be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils and colleagues on social media.
- Staff should ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies.
- Staff should be aware that any excessive use of social media in school/college may result in disciplinary action;
- Staff should be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. They are, therefore, advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video that they are about to post on a social networking site is something that they want pupils, colleagues, other employees of the trust, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!

Acceptable Use

Employees should be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if you restrict it to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond

the intended recipients. Therefore, employees using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

Employees should not upload any content on to social media sites that:

- is confidential to the school or its staff;
- amounts to bullying;
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
- brings the school into disrepute;
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips;
- undermines the reputation of the school and/or individuals;
- is defamatory or knowingly false;
- breaches copyright;
- is in any other way unlawful.

Guidance for Pupils using Social Networking Applications:

- Pupils must not attempt to access social networking applications during the school working day.
- No pupil should invite or attempt to join a staff area on social networking applications. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher.
- Pupils should report any improper contact or cyber bullying to their class teacher in confidence, in accordance with the Policy for Behaviour and Anti-Bullying.

Guidance for Parents and Carers using Social Networking Applications:

- Parents and carers should not post pictures of pupils, other than their own child, on social networking applications where these photographs have been taken at a school event without prior permission from the other pupils' parents/ carers.
- Parents and carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking applications about any school representative.

Safeguarding

The use of social networking sites introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

- online bullying;
- grooming, exploitation or stalking;
- exposure to inappropriate material or hateful language;
- encouraging violent behaviour, self-harm or risk taking.

In order to mitigate these risks, there are steps you can take to promote safety online:

- You should not use any information in an attempt to locate or meet a child.
- Ensure that any messages, photos or information comply with existing policies.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

- Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as urgent steps may need to be taken to support the child.
- With regard to personal safeguarding, you should report any harassment or abuse you receive online while using your work accounts.

Reporting, Responding and Recording Cyberbullying Incidents

- Staff should never engage with cyberbullying incidents. If in the course of your employment with this school, you discover a website containing inaccurate, inappropriate or inflammatory written material relating to you, or images of you which have been taken and/or which are being used without your permission, you should immediately report this to the Headteacher.
- Staff should keep any records of the abuse such as text, emails, voicemail, website or social media. If appropriate, screen prints of messages or web pages could be taken and the time, date and address of site should be recorded.

Action by Employer: Inappropriate Use of Social Media

- Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, the Headteacher will conduct a prompt investigation.
- If in the course of the investigation, it is found that a pupil submitted the material to the website, that pupil will be disciplined in line with the school's Policy for Behaviour.
- The Headteacher, where appropriate, will approach the website hosts to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency, e.g., within 24 hours. If the website requires the individual who is complaining to do so personally, the school will give their full support and assistance.
- Checks will be carried out to ensure that the requested amendments or removals are made. If the website(s) does not co-operate, the Headteacher will contact the internet service provider (ISP) as the ISP has the ability to block access to certain sites and, in exceptional circumstances, can close down a website.
- If the material is threatening and/or intimidating, senior management will, with the member of staff's consent, report the matter to the police.
- The member of staff will be offered full support and appropriate stress counselling.

Breaches of this Policy

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy (or if complaints are received about unacceptable use of social networking that has potentially breached this policy) will be investigated in accordance with the school's bullying or disciplinary procedure. The member of staff will be expected to co-operate with the school's investigation which may involve:

- handing over relevant passwords and login details;
- printing a copy or obtaining a screenshot of the alleged unacceptable content;
- determining that the responsibility or source of the content was in fact the member of staff.

The seriousness of the breach will be considered including the nature of the content, how long the content remained visible on the social media site, the potential for recirculation by others and the impact on the school or the individuals concerned.

Staff should be aware that actions online can be in breach of the harassment/IT/equality policies and any online breaches of these policies may also be treated as conduct issues in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

If the outcome of an investigation leads to disciplinary action, the consequences will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate procedures.

Serious breaches could result in the dismissal of the employee. Where conduct is considered to be unlawful, the school will report the matter to the police and other external agencies.

This policy was ratified by our Governors and disseminated to all staff.

This policy will be reviewed in the Summer Term 2026.

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Dated: June 2025

Review Date: June 2026