



The Blue Coat School

STAFF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Approved by the Governors' Safeguarding, Health and Safety Committee on _____

Signed: _____

(H Andrews – Chair of Safeguarding, Health and Safety Committee)

This Staff Social Media Policy was devised by the Lead DSL and the Director of Marketing and Admissions in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team.

Date of Next Review: Michaelmas 2026

STAFF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1

This Social Media Policy is available for parents on the school website.

I.2

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Employment Manual, the Staff Code of Conduct and other policies including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; ICT Acceptable Use Policy; and Online Safety Policy.

I.3

This Policy applies to all Governors, staff (including supply staff), contractors and volunteers ('Staff') and to all online communications which directly or indirectly represent the School.

I.4

This Policy takes account of relevant employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to the use of social media. All individuals working on behalf of the School are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including: The Human Rights Act 1998; Common law duty of confidentiality, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018).

I.5

The School respects privacy and understands that Staff 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. Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. 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. Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a School account or using the School name. All professional communications are within the scope of this Policy.

2. DEFINITION

2.1

Social networking and social media are communication tools based on websites, apps or networks which allow you to share information or other material about yourself and your interests with groups of other people. These groups of people could be people who are known to you; people you don't know but who share common interests; and anyone who could find your comments through search engines.

2.2

Social networking sites and services include, but are not limited to, blogs; online discussion forums; collaborative spaces; media sharing services; instant messaging services, 'microblogging' applications; and online gaming environments. Examples include: WhatsApp; Facebook; Facebook Live Messenger; YouTube; Flickr; Xbox Live; Blogger; Tumblr; Be Real; LinkedIn; Instagram; Snapchat; Tik Tok and comment streams on public website such as a newspaper site.

2.3

Information shared through social networking applications, even if they are in private spaces, is still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation.

3. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1

It is important for some staff to participate in social media to engage with our audience and raise the profile of The Blue Coat School. The Director of Marketing and Admissions is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of the School's social media channels and specific questions about any aspect of these channels should be addressed to her. Only those authorised to do so will have access to these accounts.

3.2

Staff authorised to post to the School's social media channels should ensure that they reflect the values of The Blue Coat School in what they post, and they should use an appropriate tone of voice. All content should bring value to our audience, engaging them and helping to communicate the work of the School to them. Staff should take care with the presentation of content and make sure that there are no typos, misspellings, or grammatical errors. The quality and appropriateness of images should also be checked.

3.3

If staff are sharing information posted by other parties, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from The Blue Coat School. When using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child at the school, staff must ensure that they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using these on social media.

3.4

Staff should refrain from offering personal or political opinions via the School's social media accounts. Where staff have any uncertainty about a particular issue, then they should speak to the Headmaster.

3.5

Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the School's reputation. The Director of Marketing and Admissions regularly monitors the School's social media spaces for mentions of The Blue Coat School so that any issues or problems can be addressed at the earliest opportunity. If any member of staff becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on the School's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Director of Marketing and Admissions without delay.

3.6

Staff are encouraged to share social media posts that the School has issued. When staff are online in a personal capacity, they might see opportunities to comment on, or support The Blue Coat School and its work. Where appropriate, and using the guidelines within this Policy, staff are encouraged to do this as it can serve to provide a human voice and raise the School's profile.

3.7

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that the Policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances, Staff will always advise the Headmaster of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

4. REQUIREMENTS

4.1

All Staff must adhere to, and apply, the principles of this Policy in all aspects of their work whilst as employees of the School. Failure to do so may lead to action being taken under the disciplinary procedures. The following principles apply to all Staff:

- Staff are requested not to identify their position and place of employment on social networking sites and other web-based sites that are used primarily for personal use (e.g. Facebook). In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the School and the individual's profession. If it is a work-based site or a site used purely for professional networking, where you are required to provide this information, you must obtain the permission of the Headmaster unless the site is on the list of approved sites of the School (e.g. LinkedIn).
- Photographs, videos or any other types of images of pupils and their families or images depicting Staff members wearing School uniforms or clothing with School logos or images must not be published on personal webspace. The photography permission parents have given only permits use on the School's official channels. Posts which were originally generated on the School's social media and which may contain such images, may be shared.
- There will be occasions when there are social contacts between pupils and Staff, where for example, the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle or are related. These contacts, however, will be easily recognised and should be openly acknowledged with the Headmaster where there may be implications for the adult and their position within the School.
- The Blue Coat School does not expect Staff members to discontinue contact with their family members and friends via personal social media once the School starts providing services for them. However, any information Staff obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way. Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- Staff must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the School into disrepute. If a member of Staff feels aggrieved, then they must follow the procedures as set out in the Staff Employment Manual and not make comments and criticisms on social media websites or blogs.
- Staff must not make comments on behalf of the School or claim to represent the views of the School, unless they have explicit permission to do so.
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the School under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.
- Staff should never use or access social networking pages of pupils or any ex-pupil under the age of 18.
- Staff must not request, or respond to, any personal information from a pupil or any ex-pupil under the age of 18.
- Staff should never post confidential information about themselves, the School, the Governing Body, their colleagues or pupils. If they are posting in an 'official' capacity, they should not post confidential information about members of the public.
- Staff should not make allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time) about other employees, pupils or other individuals connected with the School. Doing so may result in disciplinary action being taken against them. If they have concerns about practices within the School or the actions of pupils or parents, they must act in accordance with the School's Whistleblowing Policy.
- All adults should review their social networking sites to ensure that the information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and/or the School if they were to be published outside of the site.
- In their own interests, adults within the School need to be aware of the dangers of putting their personal information onto social networking sites such as addresses, home or mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for pupils or their families or friends having access to staff outside the School environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties.

- Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. They should also be circumspect in their communications with pupils in order to avoid any possible misinterpretations of their motives or any behaviour which could possibly be construed as 'grooming' in the context of sexual offending.
- Staff must not publish anything which could identify pupils, parents or guardians on any personal social media account, personal webpage or similar platform without the prior consent of the Headmaster in writing. This includes photos, videos or other materials such as pupils' work.
- Staff are not permitted to post on behalf of the School without specific permission, which will apply to specific sites.
- Staff must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.
- Staff are expected to access social media sites within their own time. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties and, in practice, personal use of the Internet should not be in School time.

5. MONITORING AND POLICY REVIEW

5.1

The Blue Coat School monitors the usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users. Users of email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the School's ICT system.

5.2

Any breach of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the member(s) of Staff involved in line with the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure as set out in the Employment Manual. A breach of this Social Media Policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of The Blue Coat School or any illegal acts or acts that render The Blue Coat School liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

5.3

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually to ensure that it complies with statutory requirements and to ensure that any changes in practices are accurately reflected. It will be presented to the Governors' Safeguarding and Health and Safety Committee for approval in the Michaelmas Term each year. The minutes of this meeting will be presented to the Governors.