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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STAFF, PUPILS, PARENTS AND THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Introduction

The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another; from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*. While recognising the benefits of this medium for new opportunities of communication, this policy sets out the principles that pupils, staff and the wider school community are expected to follow when using social media. It is crucial that all stakeholders in The Topsham School, including pupils, parents, staff and the public at large have confidence in the school. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that the use of social media is responsibly undertaken and that confidentiality of pupils and staff and the reputation of the school are safeguarded. All members of the school community must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Scope

This policy applies to The Topsham School pupils, staff, parents and the wider school community.

Under no circumstances may The Topsham School logos, crests, typefaces or brands be used or published on any personal web space or on any online or offline medium without prior consent. These are registered trademarks, patents and the intellectual property of The Topsham School.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school.

This policy applies to personal web space such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Instagram*, *SnapChat*), blogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*.

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.

Related Policies

- ICT Policies for Staff and Pupils
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff handbooks, code of conduct
- Guidance for Pupils
- Acceptable use agreement.
- Prevent Policy

Principles – Be Responsible and Respectful

- Users should be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional/school lives separate. They should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between the school and their personal interests;
- Users should not engage in activities involving social media which might bring The Topsham School into disrepute;
- Users should not represent their personal views as those of The Topsham School on any social medium;
- Users should not discuss personal information about other pupils, The Topsham School and the wider community they interact with on any social media;
- Users should not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations or The Topsham School.

Personal use of Social Media

Pupils and members of the wider school community should not identify themselves as members of The Topsham School in their personal web-space, unless specifically linked to an approved job role within the College community where it serves a purpose to professionally market the school. This is to prevent information being linked with the school and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, pupils and parents and the wider school community.

Pupils should not have contact through any personal social medium with any member of staff, whether from The Topsham School or any other school, other than those mediums approved by the Senior Leadership Team or the Admissions and Marketing Department, unless the staff concerned are family members.

If pupils and members of the wider school community wish to communicate with staff they should only do so through official school sites created for this purpose.

Information that pupils and members of the wider community have access to as part of their involvement with The Topsham School, including personal information, should not be discussed on their personal web space.

Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members, clothing with school logos or images identifying school premises should not be published on personal or public web space without prior permission from the school.

We advise that school email addresses should not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff, pupils, parents and the wider school community should not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity. The source of the correction will be recorded and The Topsham School reserves the right to amend these details for their sole purpose.

All staff, parents, pupils and members of the wider community are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. All staff, parents, pupils and members of the wider community should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online.

Pupils and the wider school community should not post images or videos from school events on any public social media site. Images or videos taken at school events, when such permission has been granted by the school, are for the sole and private use of that individual and their use must be in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The school accepts that some sites may be used for professional purposes to highlight a personal profile with summarised details, e.g. LinkedIn. The school would advise that care is taken to maintain an up to date profile and a high level of presentation on such sites if The Topsham School is listed.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest ways to express frustrations or concerns, it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as private and confidential discussion are most appropriate.

The school considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites.

- Making allegations about pupils at the School/cyber bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the School will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in anyway or if the circumstance warrant this;
- Set out the School's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the Police where the school feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial or homophobic element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- Take other legal action against the individual.

Monitoring of Internet Use

The Topsham School monitors usage of its internet, online content, online services and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

Users of The Topsham School email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

Breaches of this Policy

Any breach of this policy that leads to a breach of confidentiality, defamation or damage to the reputation of The Topsham School or any illegal acts or acts that render The Topsham School liable to third parties may result in legal action, disciplinary action or sanctions in line with the published school policies for staff and pupils.

Where parents or pupils are found to have breached this policy the headteacher or governors will meet with parents to remind them of the policy. Following this meeting a decision is made as to what further course of action might be taken which may include legal action where there has been damage to the school, individuals or the school's reputation.

Guidelines for safe Social Media usage can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/stay-safe-online/protect-your-personal-information/social-networks>

<http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/onlinesafety/pages/socialnetworking.aspx>

http://www.getsafeonline.org/social-networking/social-networking-sites/#.Uq7_0IPs084

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/courses/social-media-basics/lessons/stay-safe-on-social-networks>

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