HOLYWELL CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

Social Media Policy

Author	MG Simpson / A Craddock
Responsibility	All staff and the governing body
Effective Date	March 2026
Review Date	March 2027
Approved by Ethos Committee	March 2026
Storage: (i) Electronic	(i) School network and on Google Drive / School website
Distribution	All staff and governors

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up" Ephesians 4:29

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" 1 Corinthians 15:33:

As a Church of England School, our Social Media Policy at Holywell School is rooted in our distinctively Christian character and our core beliefs which are Gospel inspired and which support the school's Vision:

At Holywell, our vision is that everyone in our community chooses to "Live Life in all its Fullness" (John 10:10).
Inspired by the teaching of Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
we choose to live our values,
being the best we can be
in community."
As a school, we are guided by 'Live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). We encourage everyone in our community to make the right choices, to follow the teachings of Jesus, to be committed to keeping each other safe, to keep the focus on learning and to be peaceful problem-solvers. All behaviour is a choice: living life in all its fullness is also a choice; it changes the way we see each other and is revealed in our most challenging moments; it is in these challenging moments that we look to the inspiration of Jesus to make the right choices. Holywell recognises and embraces the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. While 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. As in all areas of life, a Christian's words should be guided by what God has said in His word:

2 Timothy 2:24-26.
And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

In teaching others, the Lord's servant (which applies to all Christians) must not be quarrelsome (looking for a fight) but must teach God's word accurately, gently, patiently, and humbly. This is the underpinning ethos behind our social media policy.

Purpose of the policy

- The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect the school, its students and its employees, and to promote the effective use of social media as part of the school activities.
- This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by members of the school community (including our employees).
- The policy prevents and avoid damage to the reputation of the school through irresponsible use of social media and protects our staff from cyberbullying and potentially career damaging behaviour.
- The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the school's IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- Personal communications via social media accounts that are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards or our school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.
- This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full-time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees, governors and agency workers.

Roles, responsibilities and procedure

Employees, governors and agency workers should:

- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, students and colleagues on social media;
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies, i.e. those of the employer;
- be aware that any excessive, non-educational use of social media in school may result in disciplinary action;
- 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 students, colleagues, other employees of the academy, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!
- report any breaches of this policy.

Managers 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.

The Headteacher in collaboration with the Human resources provider (EPM) is responsible for:

- giving specialist advice on the use of social media;
- implementing and reviewing this policy.

The governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the DSL's remit covers online safety.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Ensuring their own knowledge of online safety issues is up-to-date.
- Ensuring all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, at induction.

Definition of social media

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines **"social media"** as any online platform that offers real-time interaction between the user and other individuals or groups including, but not limited to, the following:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums, such as NetMums
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
- Media-sharing devices, such as YouTube
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, such as X (formerly Twitter)

Acceptable use (cf Staff Acceptable Use Agreement)

Employees and Governors 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 and Governors 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.

Employees and Governors should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from students or ex-students under the age of 18, In general, invitations from parents on personal social media accounts such as Facebook should also be avoided. Where parents are personal friends, due discretion must be shown and staff must be aware of professional expectations and conduct.

All communication with parents via social media should be through the school's email and/or social media accounts (e.g. through WEDUC).

Employees and Governors should note that the use of social media accounts during lesson time is not permitted.

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 on line:

- 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 and logged on CPOMS.
- 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 a member of the senior leadership team.
- 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 should be taken and the time, date and address of site should be recorded.

School accounts
The school's social media sites will only be created and monitored by the communications officer (Anna Craddock) and other designated staff members. There will be a strong pedagogical or business reason for the creation of social media accounts on behalf of the school; official school profiles and accounts will not be created for trivial reasons.

If members of staff wish to create a new social media account, they will complete the Social media site creation approval form and return it to the headteacher. The communications officer will be consulted about the purpose of the proposed site and its content.
A school social media account will be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by staff members and will be linked to an official school email account. Consideration will be given to the following aspects:

- The purpose for using social media
- Whether the overall investment will achieve the pedagogical aim

- The level of interactive engagement with the site
- Whether students, staff, parents or members of the public will be able to contribute content to the account
- How much time and effort staff members are willing to commit to the proposed site
- A clear plan which outlines aspects such as how long the site will last
- How the success of the site will be evaluated

School social media passwords are kept by the Deputy headteacher with responsibility for Social Media (Anna Craddock) – these are not shared with any unauthorised persons, including students, unless otherwise permitted by the headteacher. Staff will adhere to the data protection principles of this policy at all times.

Staff will ensure any posts are positive in nature and relevant to students, the work of staff, the school or any achievements. Staff will not post any content online which is damaging to the school or any of its staff or students.

All content expressed on school social media accounts will not breach copyright, data protection or freedom of information legislation.

Staff will ensure the headteacher has checked the content before anything is posted on social media. If staff wish for reminders to be posted for parents, e.g. returning slips for a school trip, staff will seek permission from the headteacher before anything is posted.
If inappropriate content is accessed online, a report form will be completed and passed on to the online safety officer. The online safety officer retains the right to monitor staff members' internet usage in line with the Data and Cyber-security Breach Prevention and Management Plan.

The school's social media accounts will comply with site rules at all times, particularly with regards to the minimum age limit for use of the site. It will be noted that each networking site has their own rules which must be followed – the communications officer will induct staff to each new social media platform, providing them with the relevant training and information.

Parent social media use

Parents are able to comment on or respond to information shared via social media sites; however, parents should do so in a way which does not damage the reputation of the school.

Parents will be asked not to share any photos or personal details of students when commenting on school social media sites, nor post comments concerning other students or staff members, in accordance with the Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents.

Any parents that are seen to be breaching the guidance in this policy will be contacted by a senior member of staff and may be reported to the social media provider, national internet safety monitoring (https://swgfl.org.uk/helplines/professionals-online-safety-helpline/, or https://saferinternet.org.uk/report-harmful-content) and/or the police.

Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content could lead to prosecution.

Action by Holywell: inappropriate use of social media by parents and students

- Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, the senior manager will conduct a prompt investigation.
- If in the course of the investigation, it is found that a student and/or parent submitted the material to the social media platform / website, that student will be disciplined in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- The senior manager, where appropriate, will either approach the social media platform website hosts or the owner of the account to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency, i.e. within 24 hours. If the social media platform / 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 social media platform / website(s) does not co-operate, the senior manager 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 there is no response from the social media platform, support can also be sought from https://swgfl.org.uk/helplines/professionals-online-safety-helpline/ and https://saferinternet.org.uk/report-harmful-content
- 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.

Action by Holywell: inappropriate use of social media by staff, governors or agency workers

Any member of staff, governor or agency worker 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 disciplinary procedure. The member of staff, governor or agency worker 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 staff code of conduct / IT / e-safety / safeguarding 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.

Monitoring and review

If the manager reasonably believes that an employee has breached this policy, from time to time the school will monitor or record communications that are sent or received from within the school/trust's network.

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis and, in accordance with the following, on an as-and-when-required basis:

- legislative changes;
- good practice guidance;
- case law;
- significant incidents reported.

Other related policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- ICT Policy (Inc. e-safety)
- Remote Learning and Contingency Plan
- Staff Code of Conduct

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Data protection: a toolkit for schools'
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'

Social media site creation approval form

Use of social media on behalf of the school must be approved by the headteacher prior to setting up sites. Please complete this form and return it to the headteacher.

Team details		
Department:		
Moderator of site:		
Purpose of using social media		
Please describe why you want to set up this site and the content of the site		
What are your aims and what do you hope to achieve by setting up this site?		
What is the proposed content of the site?		
Proposed audience of the site		
☐ Students of the school Ages: age range	☐ School staff	☐ Students' family members
☐ External organisations	☐ Students from other schools Schools involved: name of school	☐ Members of the public
☐ Other (please give details)		
Proposed contributors to the site		
☐ Students of the school Ages: age range	☐ School staff	☐ Students' family members
☐ External organisations	☐ Students from other schools Schools involved: name of school	☐ Members of the public
☐ Other (please give details)		
Administration of the site		
Names of administrators (the site must have at least two approved administrators):		

Who will vet external contributors? (Please state name and job role)	
Who will host the site?	
Proposed date of going live:	
How do you propose to advertise for contributors?	
If contributors include students, how do you propose to inform and obtain the consent of parents or responsible adults?	
What security measures will you take to prevent unwanted or unsuitable individuals from contributing or becoming 'friends' and 'followers' etc. of the site?	

Approval		
Approval from relevant people must be obtained before the site can be created. The relevant managers must read this form and complete the information below before final approval can be given by the headteacher.		
Communications officer **I approve the aims and content of the proposed site and the use of the school brand and logo.**	Name:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	
Headteacher **I approve the aims and content of the proposed site and the use of the school brand and logo.**	Name:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	

Inappropriate content report form

Staff name (submitting report):	
Name of individual accessing inappropriate content (if known):	
Date:	
Full URL(s):	
Nature of inappropriate content:	
To be completed by online safety officer	
Action taken:	
Staff name:	
Date:	
Signature:	