St Mary's RC Primary School

Social Media Policy

'We Care, We Pray, We Work, We Play, In Jesus' Way…'

Version	**1**
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Policy adopted by school	**Dominique Hayes (Headteacher)**
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1. **Policy Aims**

This Online Safety Policy has been written by St Mary's RC Primary School. It takes into account the DfE statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education" 2023. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Safeguard and protect all members of St Mary's RC Primary School on social media
- enable all staff to work safely and responsibly
- to role model positive behaviour on social media
- to manage professional standards and practice when using technology
- identify clear procedures to use when responding to social media safety concerns.

2. **About this policy**

- St Mary's RC Primary School believes that online safety, including the use of social media, is an essential part of safeguarding and acknowledges its duty to ensure that all learners and staff are protected from potential harm online.
- St Mary's RC Primary School identifies that the internet and social media are an important part of everyday life. Learners should be empowered to build resilience and to develop strategies to manage and respond to risk online.
- This policy applies to all staff including the governing body, teachers, support staff, external contractors, visitors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of the setting (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy) as well as learners, parents and carers.

3. **Links with other policies**

This policy links with several other policies (but not limited to):

- Data Protection, Information Management and Retention Policies
- ICT and Acceptable User Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

4. **Monitoring and Review**

Technology in this area evolves and changes rapidly; St Mary's RC Primary School will review this policy at least every two years.

- The policy will also be revised following any national or local policy requirements, any child protection concerns or any changes to the technical infrastructure.
- We will regularly monitor internet use and evaluate online safety mechanisms to ensure that this policy is consistently applied.
- To ensure they have oversight of online safety, the DSL, ICT strategy and safeguarding team will be informed of online safety concerns, as appropriate.
- Any issues identified via monitoring will be incorporated into our action planning.

5. **Roles and Responsibilities**

This policy applies to all staff including the governing body, teachers, support staff, external contractors, visitors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of the setting (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy) as well as learners, parents and carers.

- <u>Leadership and management responsibilities:</u>

- To ensure there are appropriate and up-to-date policies regarding online safety; including a staff code of conduct/behaviour policy and acceptable use policy, which covers acceptable use of technology.
- To ensure that staff who are using school's official social media sites have received relevant training.
- To monitor the use of school's official social media sites.

- Staff responsibilities:
  - To contribute to the development of online safety policies and read and adhere to relevant policies.
  - To take responsibility for the security of setting systems and the data they use or have access to.
  - To model good practice when using technology and maintain a professional level of conduct in their personal use of technology, both on and off site.
  - To have an awareness of a range of online safety issues in relation to the use of social media and how they may be experienced by the children in their care.
  - To identify online safety and social media concerns and take appropriate action by following the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.
  - To take personal responsibility for professional development in this area.

- Learners (at a level that is appropriate to their age and ability) responsibilities:
  - To engage in age-appropriate online safety (including social media) activities and education opportunities.
  - To read and adhere to the acceptable use policies.
  - To respect the feelings and rights of others both on and offline and on social media.
  - To take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe online and on social media.
  - To seek help from a trusted adult, if there is a concern online and on social media, and support others that may be experiencing online safety issues.

- Parents/Carers
  - To read the acceptable use policies and encourage their children to adhere to them.
  - To support our online safety and use of social media approaches by discussing online safety issues with their children and reinforcing appropriate and safe online behaviours at home.
  - To role model safe and appropriate use of technology and social media.
  - To abide by the Acceptable Use Policies and Home School Agreements.
  - To identify changes in behaviour that could indicate that their child is at risk of harm online and on social media.
  - To seek help and support from the setting, or other appropriate agencies, if they or their child encounter risk or concerns online or on social media.
  - To take responsibility for their own awareness in relation to the risks and opportunities posed by new and emerging technologies.
  - To refrain from using social media to share their concerns but to use school's appropriate channels and talk to the class teacher or Head Teacher.
  - To refrain from posting any images or videos which include any child other than their own child on any social media or otherwise publish those images or videos.

6. **Expectations when using social media**

- The expectations' regarding safe and responsible use of social media applies to all members of St Mary's RC Primary School community.

- The term social media may include (but is not limited to): blogs; wikis; social networking sites; forums; bulletin boards; online gaming; apps; video/photo sharing sites; chatrooms and instant messenger.
- All members of St Mary's RC Primary School are expected to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner.
- All members of St Mary's RC Primary School are advised not to publish specific and detailed private thoughts, concerns, pictures or messages on any social media services, especially content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others.
- St Mary's RC Primary School will control learner and staff access to social media whilst using setting provided devices and systems on site.
  - The use of social media during setting hours for personal use is not permitted.
  - Inappropriate or excessive use of social media during setting hours or whilst using setting devices may result in disciplinary or legal action and/or removal of internet facilities.
- Concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of St Mary's RC Primary School community on social media, should be reported to the Head Teacher, IT Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and will be managed in accordance with our anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour and child protection policies.

7. **Staff Personal Use of Social Media**

- The safe and responsible use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites will be discussed with all members of staff as part of staff induction and will be revisited and communicated via regular staff training opportunities.
- Safe and professional behaviour will be outlined for all members of staff (including volunteers) as part of our code of conduct/behaviour policy as part of Internet and Acceptable Use Policy.

Reputation

- All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within the setting.
- Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or institution into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.
- All members of staff are advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media sites. Advice will be provided to staff via staff training and by sharing appropriate guidance and resources on a regular basis. This will include (but is not limited to):
  - Setting the privacy levels of their personal sites.
  - Being aware of location sharing services.
  - Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
  - Logging out of accounts after use.
  - Keeping passwords safe and confidential.
  - Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as that of the setting.
- Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of their school on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the setting, and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post online and to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance our policies and the wider professional and legal framework.

- Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about learners and their family members or colleagues will not be shared or discussed on social media sites.
- Members of staff will notify the Head Teacher/IT Manager immediately if they consider that any content shared on social media sites conflicts with their role.

Communicating with learners and parents and carers

- All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add as 'friends' any current or past learners or their family members via any personal social media sites, applications or profiles.
- Any pre-existing relationships or exceptions that may compromise this, will be discussed with the Head Teacher and/or DSL.
- If ongoing contact with learners is required once they have left the setting, members of staff will be expected to use existing alumni networks or use official setting provided communication tools.
- Staff will not use personal social media accounts to contact learners or parents, nor should any contact be accepted, except in circumstance whereby prior approval has been given by the headteacher.
- Any communication from learners and parents received on personal social media accounts will be reported to the Head Teacher and/or DSL.

8. **Students' Use of Social Media**

- Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to learners as part of an embedded and progressive education approach, via age-appropriate sites and resources.
- We are aware that many popular social media sites state that they are not for children under the age of 13, therefore we will not create accounts specifically for learners under this age.
- Any concerns regarding learners' use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with existing policies, including anti-bullying and behaviour.
- Concerns will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly when concerning underage use of social media sites, games or tools.
- Learners will be advised:
    - To consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
    - To only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others by making profiles private.
    - Not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other responsible adult's permission and only when a trusted adult is present.
    - To use safe passwords.
    - To use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
    - How to block and report unwanted communications.
    - How to report concerns both within the setting and externally.

9. **Official Use of Social Media**

- St Mary's RC Primary School official social media channels are FaceBook, Twitter and the school website.
- The official use of social media sites only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives, with specific intended outcomes.
    - The official use of social media as a communication tool has been formally risk assessed and approved by the headteacher.

    - Leadership staff have access to account information and login details for our social media channels, in case of emergency, such as staff absence.
- Official social media channels have been set up as distinct and dedicated social media sites or accounts for educational or engagement purposes only.
    - Staff use setting provided email addresses to register for and manage any official social media channels and **not** personal email accounts.
    - Official social media sites are suitably protected and linked to our website.
    - Public communications on behalf of the setting will, where appropriate and possible, be read and agreed by at least one other colleague who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including: Anti-Bullying; Data Protection, Information Management and Retention; Safeguarding and Child Protection.
    - All communication on official social media platforms will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny.
- All staff using official social media channels will have read this policy and signed the St Mary's RC Primary School Social Media User Agreement (Appendix 1).
- Parents/carers and learners will be informed of any official social media use, along with expectations for safe use and action taken to safeguard the community.
    - Only social media tools which have been risk assessed and approved as suitable for educational purposes will be used.
    - Any official social media activity involving learners will be moderated possible.
- Parents and carers will be informed of any official social media use with learners; written parental consent will be obtained, as required.
- We will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.

Staff expectations

- Members of staff who follow and/or like our official social media channels will be advised to use dedicated professionals' accounts, where possible, to avoid blurring professional boundaries.
- If members of staff are participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the setting, they will:
    - Sign our Social Media User Agreement (Appendix 1).
    - Always be professional and aware they are an ambassador for the setting.
    - Disclose their official role but make it clear that they do not necessarily speak on behalf of the setting.
    - Always be responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
    - Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.
    - Ensure that they have appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel.
    - Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the setting, unless they are authorised to do so.
    - Not engage with any direct or private messaging with current, or past, learners, parents and carers.
    - Inform their line manager, the IT manager and/or the Head Teacher of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from learners.

(Appendix 1)

St Mary's RC Primary School
Social Media User Agreement

When using school social media accounts, the following practices must be observed:

St Mary's RC Primary School's official social media channels are FaceBook, Twitter and the school website. Staff who want to act as users of any of these accounts must have the agreement of the Headteacher and/or IT manager and follow the guide below:

(a) Password or login details for all social media accounts will be provided by the IT Manager/Head Teacher who will retain a record of such information. These should not be changed without the IT Manager's/Head Teacher's permission.

(b) The content of any school social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.

(c) Staff must ensure that school has parent consent to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of any student before any image or video is posted. Student's names/initials must **NOT** be used in conjunction with any photograph or video (see Data Protection, Information Management and Retention Policy).

(d) Staff must ensure that they do not identify a student using their full name. Only forenames or initials may be used without express parent consent.

(e) The Head Teacher and/or Data Protection Officer must be contacted and additional consent sought if photos of students and names/initials are to be posted on social media accounts (including websites).

(f) Disclose their official role but make it clear that they do not necessarily speak on behalf of the setting.

(g) Always be responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.

(h) Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.

(i) Ensure that, where appropriate and possible, any public communication is read and agreed by at least one other colleague who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

(j) Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.

(k) Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to the Headteacher and IT manager.

(l) Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public.

(m) Staff should not seek to view/link up with student accounts. For example, in the case of Twitter, staff should not "follow back" those who follow, share or like School comments or posts.

The failure to follow the rules set out above may give rise to disciplinary action.

Member of staff signature	Date	Head Teacher/IT manager signature	Date

(Appendix 2)

St Mary's RC Primary School
Social Media Use – a guide for parents

Dear Parents and Carers

As you are aware, access to and use of social media is common these days and has become second nature to many of us. With this in mind, we wanted to provide some advice that is intended to help safeguard your children and yourselves as parents/carers.

Social media is a good example of how online behaviour can present e-safety risks. Users can express themselves with online personalities and chat and socialise with peers. They can publish and share multimedia content such as music, photos and video clips. If used inappropriately however, users can put themselves and others at risk.

Most social media sites set age restrictions. Facebook, for example, sets an age restriction of 13 years of age for users of its site. However, there is no verification and younger children often ignore the terms and conditions of use, unaware of the risks this might pose. Something to remember is that if your child is using false information to obtain an account on a social media site, other people can do so as well.

Most social media sites allow users to set their profiles to 'private' for viewing only by approved contacts. By not using these settings, users can put themselves at risk. Children and young people can also put themselves, and others, at risk when they:

- Upload inappropriate, offensive or even illegal content to their own online spaces.
- Post material that could damage their reputation or the reputation of others.
- Post inappropriate comments on other people's profiles that is humiliating or results in bullying.
- Accept friend requests or engage in chat with people who they do not know.

Unfortunately, some parents and carers can also put themselves at risk when posting online about incidents that may have taken place at school. Cases of inappropriate comments to and about others, inaccuracies and misrepresentation are now commonly reported in the media and will be taken seriously by the school. Comments made online are not safe and secure and should never be considered as such. We need to set the best example for our children, so we would urge you to think before you type/post and also consider the school's home-school agreement.

If you, as parents and carers have any concerns about matters taking place at school, please address them through the appropriate channels, i.e. a discussion with the class teacher or Head Teacher, rather than expressing your concerns online. In this way, we can work with you to address any concerns that you may have. Malicious or fictitious comments should not be posted on social networking sites about any member of the school community. In extreme cases St Mary's RC Primary School may seek to have defamatory, negative or inappropriate comments taken down from social media platforms, and will seek legal advice where appropriate.

Violence or threat of violence expressed online is completely unacceptable and potentially criminal. 'Cyber bullying' is not a matter that St Mary's RC Primary School takes lightly.

If you have any concerns about your child's use of social networking sites or would like support in knowing how to keep your child safe online please contact your school for advice, support and signposting. Alternatively, you can access information via www.thinkuknow.co.uk.