



Policy Name	SOCIAL MEDIA
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What is Social Media?

Social media is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online.

This includes websites or apps that help you create and share content and communicate with others. Social media platforms include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, Threads, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Nextdoor and WhatsApp. It also includes SharePoint, MS Teams and Viva Engage (formerly known as Yammer).

This list is not exhaustive and consists of any platform, website and application that focuses on communication, community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. The guidance also covers any new platforms which will be developed in the future.

Personal Responsibility

You take personal responsibility for anything that you say or do on your personal social media accounts, so remember that all your social media participation is in the public domain, permanently available, open to being republished in other media and potentially disclosable in employment and/or legal matters, even if it is a private message or closed group.

Remember that your social media content (things you've posted, commented on, liked and shared) can be viewed by a wider audience than just your immediate contacts. Things originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on and might be viewed by colleagues, parents, students, governors, partner organisations.

Although in most cases you can delete your social media activity, some digital footprint will always remain. It's better to think first, and if you're not sure, don't do it.

Expectations

We expect you to behave appropriately and in line with our policies. When using social media you need to hold yourselves to the same standard of professionalism as you would in person.

You are responsible for anything that you say or do on your personal social media accounts – the things you've posted, commented on, liked or shared.

It is important that the content you post, comment on, like or share does not damage the reputation of the school, its employees, governors or pupils. Furthermore, employees should take care that posts, comments, likes, shares etc uploaded onto their personal social media accounts are not perceived to be those made by the school.

Key Points

- Do not use work email addresses to set up personal social media accounts.
- Professional boundaries should be maintained at all times.

- We recommend activating the highest privacy settings on your personal social media accounts, and that you do not accept parents or service users known to you in the course of your work as friends in your personal social media accounts.
- You should not accept a friend sent by a contractor providing services to the school, as this could imply close personal association. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not apply to sites which are intended as neutral, professional connections registries (such as LinkedIn).
- If you're talking about the school on your personal social media accounts, you should be clear about what your own personal role is within the school and not say anything that might have a negative impact on the school's reputation.
- You must not make any derogatory, untrue or discriminating comments about the school, its employees, governors or pupils.
- You must not share confidential information arising from your employment; never post personal, confidential or sensitive information you have been privy to as part of your role.
- Remember your commitment to safeguarding and promoting welfare. Make sure that your content is suitable and appropriate - it should also never compromise your professionalism. Inappropriate employee conduct, even if in a personal capacity, may be grounds for disciplinary action, if it could bring the school into disrepute or damage relationships.
- Remember the law. Laws of defamation and harassment apply to social media in the same way as written or spoken communication and people can sue you personally for damages if they consider their reputation has been or may be harmed, or if your posts constitute harassment.
- Familiarise yourself with our Acceptable Behaviour Policy, and be aware that use of social media (whether personal or corporate account use) to bully or harass colleagues, parents or pupils, will not be tolerated.
- You should not use private messaging or social media to discuss work issues with colleagues or to make contact with Senior Leaders unless previously agreed.
- While a situation can feel urgent, you very rarely need to react immediately on social media. If you are unsure of the tone of what you're about to send, waiting and seeking advice will always be the wisest course of action.

Staying Safe

Receiving unpleasant or unwanted content on social media can be very upsetting and distressing for you, your colleagues, families and friends.

There may be occasions where, as a result of your role in the school, you will receive negative comments on social media.

Tips to protect you, and a way to avoid comments or targeting:

- Use privacy settings to restrict access to personal information.
- Limit the amount of information on your 'public' profile. Avoid putting your mobile phone number, address, schools attended or photos that could identify your location.
- Never accept random friend requests from people.
- Use something other than a photo of yourself on your home page.
- Consider using a nickname and surname, or first and middle name to be less searchable or identifiable online. But do not use a fake name as this is against most social media platform policies. If you become locked out of your account, you may need to use your ID to regain access.

A few things to remember NOT to do:

- Don't share anything you do not know to be true or completely accurate.
- Don't comment in haste, particularly when you are angry or have consumed alcohol.
- Don't post comments that you would not be prepared to make on paper or face-to-face.
- Don't give out personal details such as your address or phone number.

What to do if you experience online hate or trolling:

- If you are on the receiving end of social media hate or are facing online trolling, resist the urge to respond or engage. Normally trolls want a reaction so by responding you may invite further abuse and hate. Instead please do the following:
 - *Record* – If someone has named you, given out your personal details on social media in regards to your role within the school, or you have been tagged in or sent an abusive direct message, then you should make a record of it. This is important in case the matter develops further – particularly if the police become involved. The best way to do this is to take a screenshot. Make sure to capture the time, date and sender.
 - *Deleting and moderating comments* - If you receive an inappropriate or abusive online comment on your own page or profile, you can delete or hide their comment – this will mean your other followers will not see it. You may find the following links helpful:
 - [How to delete or hide a comment on Facebook](#)
 - [How to hide replies on Twitter/X](#)
 - [How to delete comment on LinkedIn](#)
 - [How to delete comment on Instagram](#)If you see online hate or trolling on social media which are not directly on your personal profile or a school page but instead on the user's profile or comments shared into a public group then unfortunately you are not able to delete the comments, but you can report them.
 - *Report* – Most social media platforms have 'rules' or 'terms of use' that prohibit abusive behaviour. Each has different wording, but most forbid behaviours that are abusive, bullying, harassing, or intimidating.

If you feel someone has broken a social media platform's 'rules', you can report the user to the platform in question. It will then be up to the platform to take further action. You may find the following links useful:-

- [How to report on Facebook](#)
- [How to report on Twitter/X](#)
- [How to report on LinkedIn](#)
- [How to report on Instagram](#)

In certain circumstances such as threats of violence you might also need to report to the police. If you do report a matter, you should follow the advice given to you by the police and respond to their requests for information.

Support is Available

Remember that you are not on your own. Online abuse can cause distress and anxiety so please let your line manager or head teacher know what is happening because they are there to help and support you.

For further advice and support please call 01392 383445 or email:
schooldataprotection@devon.gov.uk

Conclusion – points to remember

- If in any doubt, stop and seek advice.
- Protect confidentiality at all times.
- Think before you post. If you're unsure; don't post!
- Don't post inappropriate material.
- Be professional.
- Show empathy.
- Think about who can see your posts.
- Manage privacy settings.
- Be aware others can share your posts.
- Consider your impact.
- Digital footprints last forever.