



## HOPE VIEW SCHOOL

# Social Media & Communication Policy 2024

Date Agreed: July 2022

Date of Next Review: September 2025

### **Key Contact Personnel in School**

Mrs P Johnson - Headteacher

Mr Carl Goodhew – DSL

Mrs C Lorne - Proprietor

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example on social networking sites such as *Facebook* or TikTok to keeping up with other people's lives on *X* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.
- 1.2 While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Hope View School staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.
- 1.3 It is crucial that pupils, parents/carers, and the public at large have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school are safeguarded.
- 1.4 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

# 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to Hope View School senior leadership team, all teaching and other staff, external contractors providing services on behalf of the teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.
- 2.2 This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes,.
- 2.3 This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *MySpace*), blogs, mircoblogs 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.

# 3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Hope View School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. 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 Data Protection Act 2018.
- 3.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g., pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 2018
  - Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality.
  - School or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information.
  - Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
  - Politically sensitive information.
- 3.3 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment, and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:
- Libel Act 1843
  - Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
  - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
  - Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
  - Malicious Communications Act 1998
  - Communications Act 2003, and
  - Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.
- 3.4 Hope View School could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render Hope View School liable to the injured party.

## **4 RELATED POLICIES**

- 4.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:
- Safeguarding Policy
  - Child Protection Policy
  - Anti Bullying Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Grievance Policy and Procedures
  - Staff Disciplinary Policy
  - Complaints Policy
  - Staff ICT Acceptable Use Policy

## **5 PRINCIPLES – *BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL***

- 5.1 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school and your personal interests.
- 5.2 You must not engage in activities involving social media which might Hope View School into disrepute.
- 5.3 You must not represent your personal views as those of Hope View School on any social medium.

- 5.4 You must not discuss personal information about pupils, staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media, via email or mobile phone.
- 5.5 You must not use social media or other means of communication, including the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, or the school.
- 5.6 You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of Hope View School.

## **6 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA including mobile phones and personal email accounts.**

- 6.1 Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Hope View School or service providers for the school in their personal webspace. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.
- 6.2.1 Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium, including via personal email or mobile phone with any pupil, whether from Hope View School, including any pupil who previously attended the school, or any other school, unless the pupils are family members.
- 6.2.2 The school expects staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members 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.
- 6.3 Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media.
- 6.4 Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts.
- 6.4.1 **On leaving the school's service, staff members must not contact pupils by means of personal social media sites or via mobile phone or personal email. Staff must not share their personal email, mobile phone, address or other personal contact details with present or previous pupils or their family members under any circumstances.** Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- 6.8 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, must not be discussed on their personal webspace.
- 6.9 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 identifying school premises (must not be published on personal webspace).

- 6.10 School and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- 6.11 Staff members 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.
- 6.12 Hope View School corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal webspace.
- 6.13 Access to social media sites for personal reasons is not allowed and staff should not their mobile phones between working hours to access social media sites. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties, personal use of the internet should not be on the school's time.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the workplace.

- 6.13 Staff members 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. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

## **7 MONITORING OF INTERNET USE**

- 7.1 Hope View School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.
- 7.2 Users of Hope View 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.

## **8 BREACHES OF THE POLICY**

- 8.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Hope View School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 8.2 A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Hope View School or any illegal acts or acts that render the school liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- 8.3.1 Contracted providers of the school must inform the school immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.