



# Social Networking Policy

*Information for Parents: This policy is available on request.*

## **Introduction**

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The widest used are: Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Periscope, WhatsApp, X (formerly known as Twitter), as well as Facebook. There are numerous others! The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

All social networking sites and apps require the users to be aged 13 and above. There are some exceptions, e.g. YouTube will allow under 13's to have an account if they have parental permission. [www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking](http://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking).

Research shows that there are many primary age pupils active on the above social networking sites.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff, pupils and parents and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

## **1 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the school is not exposed to legal risks.
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.
- Those who are associated with the school are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

## **2 Scope**

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders including employees, Trustees, Governors, parents, where applicable, pupils' carers and those with parental responsibility and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives'. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

## **3 Use of social networking sites in school time**

3.1 Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher.

3.2 School representatives must adhere to the following:

Social networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.

- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school. References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Headteacher.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take action against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

### 3.3 Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social-networking sites.
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18. This means no member of school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.

- Where family and friends have pupils in the school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher. However, they should not network during the working day on school equipment.
- Ensure appropriate language is used in any comments placed on social network sites.
- Review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Ensure that any comments and/or any forms of media will not be deemed as defamatory.
- Post information or opinions about The Ursuline Preparatory School, Warley or media from school events.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

#### 3.4 Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites.
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school day.
- No pupil mobile phones should be allowed in school at any time. If a phone is found it will be confiscated by the Headteacher.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on any social networking platforms. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher. Parents will be informed if this happens.
- Designated members of staff are allowed to access the school's X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram accounts to post relevant material about the school.

### 3.5 Guidance Protection for parents/carers on using social networking

- No posts should be made that include other members of the school community. For example, videos or photographs taken at school events.
- No allegations about staff or pupils at the school should be made via any social networking platforms or messaging applications such as WhatsApp.
- No complaints about school staff should be aired via any social-networking or messaging platforms. This includes defamatory statements about the school staff.