Social Media Policy

The Vyne Community School

Approved at:	C&S Committee	Date: 3rd February 2026
Last reviewed on:	January 2026	
Next review due by:	January 2027	

Reference Documents:

Child Protection Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Online Safety Policy
Behaviour for Learning Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Prevent Strategy Policy
Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
Managing Allegations against Students Policy
Acceptable Use Agreement of ICT for Staff
Computer Systems and Internet Agreement for Students
Acceptable User Policy for Students
Staff Behaviour Code of Conduct

1. RATIONALE

This policy should be read alongside:

- Online Safety Policy
- Student Computer Systems and Internet Agreement
- Acceptable Use Policy for Students
- Acceptable Use of ICT for Staff
- Hampshire County Council "Online Safety" guidance
- Hampshire County Council "Social media guides"

This policy has been developed with reference to guidance from professional teaching associations, recognised trade unions, ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), and local authority advice. It sets out clear expectations for the professional and personal use of the internet and social media, highlighting associated risks and the consequences of misuse.

Concerns relating to online safety or social media use must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Online Safety Lead, or Headteacher. Staff may also seek advice from their professional association or trade union.

2. INTRODUCTION

Social media and online technologies play an increasingly important role in education, professional development, and communication. When used appropriately, they can enhance teaching and learning, collaboration, and engagement with the wider community. However, misuse of social media can pose significant risks to students, staff, and the reputation of the school. This policy therefore sets out principles to ensure that all use of the internet and social media is safe, lawful, professional, and responsible. Staff must maintain clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives and act in a manner that upholds public confidence in the school at all times.

3. OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to:

- Define responsibilities for staff, governors, contractors, and volunteers
- Promote safe, lawful, and effective use of social media and the internet
- Protect students, staff, and the school from harm or reputational damage
- Support professional use of digital technologies in education

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Governors
- All teaching and support staff
- Contractors and service providers
- Trainee teachers, volunteers, and placement students

For the purposes of this policy, all are referred to as "staff members."

The policy applies to both personal and professional use of:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter)
- Blogs and microblogs
- Forums and chatrooms
- Media-sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)

- Collaborative platforms (e.g. Wikipedia)

As technology evolves rapidly, the principles of this policy apply regardless of platform.

5. RISKS

The school recognises the following risks associated with internet and social media use:

- Cyberbullying or harassment
- Access to inappropriate content
- Breaches of confidentiality or data protection
- Reputational damage to the school
- Malware, phishing, or social engineering attacks
- Loss or theft of personal data
- Legal action arising from unlawful online activity
- Inappropriate identification as a school employee online

6. APPLYING THE POLICY

6.1 Responsibilities of Staff

Staff are expected to:

- Act professionally and responsibly online at all times
- Comply with professional Codes of Conduct
- Uphold the school's duty to provide a safe, respectful working environment
- Avoid any online behaviour that could constitute bullying, harassment, or discrimination

6.2 Use of Social Media for School Purposes

When using social media or the internet on behalf of the school, staff must ensure that:

- Use is lawful, appropriate, and approved
- School business is conducted only through school-approved accounts
- Personal accounts are not used for official school communication
- Published content is:
    - Accurate, respectful, and professional
    - Compliant with copyright and data protection law
    - Free from defamatory, offensive, or discriminatory material
- Students and parents/carers are not identified without explicit permission
- Safeguarding concerns are reported immediately
- Political campaigning, commercial promotion, or personal interests are not promoted

Use of online platforms with students must comply with age restrictions and parental awareness requirements.

6.3 Personal Use of Social Media and the Internet

The school's internet connection is primarily for educational purposes. Limited personal use may be permitted, but:

- There is no automatic right to personal use
- Internet and email activity may be monitored
- Inappropriate or excessive use may result in disciplinary action
- Access may be withdrawn at any time

Staff must not:

- Access or share offensive, illegal, or inappropriate material
- Download unauthorised software or media
- Bypass filtering or security controls
- Use file-sharing or illegal download services
- Store sensitive personal data on unapproved cloud services

Accidental access to prohibited content must be reported immediately.

7. SCHOOL REPUTATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff have a right to a private life, but must ensure their online activity does not:

- Bring the school into disrepute
- Compromise confidentiality
- Blur professional boundaries

Staff must not:

- Identify themselves as school employees in a way that damages the school
- Accept social media contact with students under 18 (unless family)
- Engage in unauthorised online contact with parents/carers
- Disclose personal or sensitive data
- Use social media to bully or harass others

Any conflict between online activity and professional role must be reported to SLT immediately.

8. CYBERBULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Cyberbullying and harassment are treated as seriously as face-to-face incidents and may occur inside or outside working hours.

The school will:

- Investigate all allegations promptly
- Support victims appropriately
- Take disciplinary action where necessary

Staff should preserve evidence and report incidents immediately. Where content is illegal or involves safeguarding concerns, the police must be contacted without delay.

9. COMPLIANCE AND SANCTIONS

All staff are required to:

- Read and understand this policy
- Sign the declaration in Appendix 2 (via google form)

Breaches of this policy may result in:

- Disciplinary action
- Withdrawal of ICT access
- Dismissal
- Referral to external agencies where appropriate

APPENDIX 1

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The School is committed to ensuring that all staff provide services that meet the highest standards of professionalism, confidentiality, and integrity. All individuals working on behalf of the School are subject to a legal duty of confidence and must comply with relevant legislation and professional Codes of Conduct when handling information obtained through their role.

The inappropriate disclosure of confidential or personal information, including via social media or other online platforms, is likely to constitute a breach of law and/or professional standards.

1. **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Staff must comply with the following legislation and legal principles:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Common Law Duty of Confidentiality
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Employment Practices Data Protection Code

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Personally identifiable information relating to students, staff, parents/carers, or other individuals
- Information shared in circumstances where confidentiality is expected
- School, governing body, or County Council records containing sensitive operational or strategic information
- Commercially sensitive information, including contractual matters, negotiations, or financial data
- Politically sensitive or policy-related information not intended for public release

Such information must not be disclosed, discussed, or referenced online unless explicit and lawful authorisation has been given.

2. **Other Relevant Legislation**

Staff should be aware that additional legislation may apply to online activity, including content posted on social media or other digital platforms. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Defamation Acts 1952, 1996 and 2013
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003
- Equality Act 2010

Breaches of these laws may result in disciplinary action, civil liability, or criminal proceedings.

3. Professional Responsibility

All staff are expected to:

- Exercise professional judgement when communicating online
- Ensure that any public or private online activity does not compromise confidentiality, safeguarding, or the reputation of the School
- Seek advice from Senior Leadership if unsure whether content may breach legal or professional obligations

Failure to comply with this framework may result in disciplinary action and, where appropriate, referral to external authorities

APPENDIX 2

STAFF DECLARATION

I have read and understand the Social Media Policy and understand that inappropriate use may be considered to be misconduct or gross misconduct and may, after proper investigation, lead to a disciplinary sanction or dismissal. I understand that, in certain circumstances, inappropriate use of Social Media may become a matter for police or social care investigations. I understand that if I need any clarification regarding my use of Social Media, I can seek such clarification from any member of the Senior Leadership Team.

SIGNED: .....

DATE: .....

PRINT NAME: .....