Social Media Policy

Approved by: Jade Ginger	Date: May 2021
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Applies to: See section 'Application'	

Introduction

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child sexual exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation: technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three areas of risk:

- **content**: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults
- **conduct**: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

(in line with **Keeping Children Safe In Education – September 2020**)

The widespread availability and use of social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting 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 duties to Egerton High School, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. To capture the benefits offered by social media, EHS may explore and implement its use for school improvement and educational purposes.

Working in a school, requires us all to maintain professional boundaries in all forms of communication whether or not it involves electronic/digital technology. This is vital to maintain public trust and appropriate professional relationships with students. Our conduct inside or outside of work should not lead us to blur or cross those professional boundaries.

This policy and the principles below are to help members of our community to avoid the downside risks of using social media. The principles apply to any approved use of social media communication within the school or to personal use of social media outside of school.

Application

This document applies to all staff, including agency/supply staff, volunteers, governors or anyone working within the school and using the school's systems and equipment whether on or off the premises. The policy may also apply to former employees in certain circumstances.

Social Media – What is it?
In this document, social media means electronic communication software, applications (including those running on mobile devices including texting, SMS, and videos), e-mail and web sites, which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online. Examples include, but are not limited to, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, as well as online discussion forums, blogs, other and the use of webcams. All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and **Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Malicious Communications Act 1988** and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding and IT Acceptable Use Policies.

Access to Social Media Sites using School Equipment/Systems

With the exception of communication sites created by or approved by the school for internal use, the School does not allow access to social networking websites from its computers or systems within the school day.

The Golden Principles

Any member of the EHS community is under a duty to:

- Maintain proper professional boundaries with students, parents and carers even when students, parents or carers initiate electronic interaction
- Before posting items or communicating in social media to consider seriously whether the item would be said in public or shown in public or written for the public to read. If not, or if there is some doubt then it should not be posted because you may not be able to control who sees the information and how they interpret it
- Be particularly aware of the guidelines when staff have external friendships with parents/carers.

Any member of the EHS community is under a duty **not** to:

- Disclose confidential information nor breach the right to privacy, without express authority especially about students, parents or carers, staff, voluntary or other workers at the school
- Engage in posts or activities which are detrimental to maintaining effective working relationships between individuals 'working' at the school
- Bring the reputation of the school into disrepute
- Engage in activities which compromise, or might be seen to compromise, the professional standards of teaching or the professional standards applicable to support staff
- Share information with students or parents/carers in any environment that they would not willingly and appropriately share in a school or school related setting or in the community
- Post comments which incite others to make discriminatory or other professionally unacceptable comments
- Post school logos or similar images that may lead readers of posts etc. to believe the individual is speaking on behalf of the school.
- Post images or material which uses School facilities, including that which is used to promote a private enterprise or business.

Items placed on social networking sites will be regarded as having been posted in the public domain. Thus, it is very important to be careful when using social media personally. We trust that the advice below will help all individuals to avoid falling foul of the golden principles and the points below.

Effective practices when using social media sites
Members of staff/governors should:

- Use caution when posting information on social networking sites and other online forums
- **Consider refraining from identifying themselves as working for the school as posted content could bring the school into disrepute**
- Take care that their interaction on social media does not damage working relationships between members of staff, students at the school, their families and other stakeholders and/or working partners of the school
- Maintain professional standards by communicating with student and parents/carers electronically at appropriate times of the day and through established education platforms (for example, a web page dedicated to school programme, project or class rather than via a personal profile)
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with students/parents or carers

- Decline student initiated 'friend' requests and not issue 'friend' requests to students nor communicate with students on any social network site or similar website or forum
- Maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with students to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained
- If posting an item about an aspect of the school, for which you have express permission from the Head Teacher, make it clear that any personal views are not necessarily those of the school
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.

Privacy settings-Check the settings frequently.

- Ensure that privacy settings for content/photos are set appropriately and monitor who can post to your social media locations and view what you post. You should not allow students to view or post on those locations
- Protect yourself from identity theft by restricting the amount of personal information that you give out. Be cautious about posting detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords and enable personal details to be cloned for fraudulent acts etc. and grooming.

The following activities must **not be** undertaken by any member of the EHS community**:**

- Bullying and harassment – such conduct against any colleagues via social media sites is taken as seriously as workplace bullying and harassment. Any allegations will be dealt with under the schools' normal bullying and harassment and/or disciplinary policies and may be treated as a criminal offence in certain circumstances
- Incitement of racial, religious, political hatred or similar activities – these may lead to criminal investigations and penalties
- Posting libellous statements – an individual may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned. As a representative of the school, any statement made by an employee could mean the school is vicariously liable for defamatory statements if carried out in the normal course of employment, even if performed without the consent or approval of the school. Similarly, making such statements on your own initiative and not at work could mean you face legal action
- Grooming students or similar activities to develop an inappropriate relationship(s)
- Bring the school's reputation into disrepute
- Compromising the security of the school's systems
- Breaching confidential information about the school or any of its students, staff, governors, volunteers or other individuals associated with the school**.** Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage a student, employee, governor, volunteer or supplier
- Breaches of copyright or other similar infringements – passing on text, photos etc; may infringe the owner's copyright. Always ensure that you have the permission of the owner

The school takes the matters above seriously and disciplinary action will be taken. If substantiated, the normal outcome will be dismissal. A very serious view will also be taken of any member of the EHS community who ignores or wilfully or carelessly carries out actions or omits to act which results in breaches of the instructions and advice contained in this policy and the result is for example, undermining effective working relationships, professional boundaries between individuals and student similar examples in this policy.

Dealing with inappropriate contact or material/comments

If a member of the EHS community becomes aware of inappropriate material/comments he/she should notify the Online Safety Manager/DSL as soon as possible, and if possible provide print outs of the comments made.

If a student makes 'social' or inappropriate contact with an employee or person involved in EHS, the individual must notify the DSL as soon as possible without making a response. Similarly, if any member of staff or individual associated with the school makes unintended contact with a student, the incident must be notified to the DSL as soon as possible. The school can then deal with the situation as appropriate.

Refer to the schools Online Safety Policy for more details and/or the Safeguarding Policy if the incident gives rise to potential or actual safeguarding concerns.

Final Reminders

As noted at the outset, social media is a useful means of communication. Because of its ease of access and familiarity, it can lead us to unwittingly overstep the boundaries of professional standards and conduct towards students or work colleagues.

When using social media, staff should remember that the school is a public body and that we are subject to various expectations.

Please remember that when using such media to:

- Ensure that no information is made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the school, its systems and/or any confidential information.
- Not post any confidential information regarding the school on any social networking website.
- We ask all individuals to consider whether you would want the person concerned or your employer or potential employer to see what you are about to post before posting information or images on social networking sites:

Finally, it's a good idea to review your posted information regularly – what may have seemed like a good idea at the time may not seem such a good idea some months or years later.