



Social Media Policy

**May 2023
Mersea Island School**

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BACKGROUND

Mersea Island School recognises that many staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on social media websites and may also set up personal weblogs or 'blogs' on the internet.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of staff, governors, parents and carers in relation to the school when setting up personal websites and blogs and using social networking websites. This policy relates to material posted on public areas, including those restricted to certain individuals.

SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINITION

Social media technologies take many different forms including magazines, internet forums (message boards), weblogs (blogs), microblogging (Twitter), social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), podcasts, photographs or pictures, video and virtual game worlds (Minecraft, Fortnite, etc).

USE OF INTERNET

Whilst staff, governors, parents and carers are free to use the internet in this way in relation to the school, they must ensure that they do:-

- not breach the law or disclose confidential information about the school, its staff, governors, parents, carers or pupils;
- not breach copyright;
- not defame or damage the good name and reputation of the school, its staff, governors, parents, carers or pupils;
- not disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 2018 or Mersea Island School's E-Safety policy;
- keep completely confidential any information regarding the children, their families or other staff which has been learned through their position at the school.

USE OF WEBSITES AND BLOGS INCLUDING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

It should be noted that the school does not have an official social media presence. Consequently, any groups set up by parents or carers should not incorporate any existing or previous logos of the school and should specifically state that they are not affiliated with the school.

The following guidelines apply to all staff, governors, parents and carers, who must: -

- not disclose any information that is confidential to the school or any third party that has disclosed information to the school;
- not link any personal websites, social networking sites etc to the school's website;
- not use the school website, internet systems, email addresses or intranet for their own personal use;
- not use social media to air personal grievances concerning the school but follow the procedures outlined in the school's Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy;
- not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the school;

- not allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff and clients of the school.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

When writing a weblog or a social media post for Staff, Governors, parents and carers:-

- Do not include any information that breaches copyright;
- Do not defame (libel) anyone. A member of staff, governor, parent or carer who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned;
- Do not include personal information about an individual without their consent, otherwise they risk breaching the Data Protection Act 2018, which is a criminal offence;
- Do not include material that is abusive, defamatory, sexist, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying;
- Do not bring Mersea Island School into disrepute;
- Staff should only access social media sites in their own time;
- Staff should not comment on any posts made by others relating to the school;
- Staff should not share or discuss matters relating to the school;
- Staff should not accept friend requests from present Mersea Island School pupils under any circumstances or any past pupils under the age of 18;
- Staff should use the privacy settings available;
- Staff should behave respectfully and should not engage in topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion.

FURTHER ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

Staff may not share information which is confidential or proprietary about the school. This information includes, but is not limited to, information about services, programmes, finances, strategic matters and any other internal or sensitive workplace information which has not been publicly released by the school. If a member of staff is unsure about whether this applies to a post, they must speak to their line manager before making the post online.

Staff must be mindful that online content is difficult, if not impossible, to retract once posted or sent and that appropriate disciplinary action will be taken if deemed necessary.

If staff are developing a website or writing a weblog that will mention the school and/or its staff, pupils, parents, carers, governors or volunteers, they must obtain permission in advance from the Headteacher, who may then inspect the content at their discretion to ensure it adheres to this policy.

Should a member of the media or non-traditional online media (including 'bloggers') contact a member of staff about the school, this request must be forwarded to the Headteacher in the first instance for approval.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIFICALLY IN RELATION TO PARENTS & PUPILS

Whilst the positive comments, about our school, on social media are appreciated, any concerns or issues about the school, its pupils or staff should be expressed to the school directly, verbally or in writing and not be voiced on social media.

If parents become aware of inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, they should contact the school, who will then develop a suitable plan to educate the children concerned and, if deemed necessary, the wider school.

If parents become aware of the inappropriate use of social media by other parents or school staff, they should inform the school, who will then take the necessary steps to remedy the situation.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY PUPILS

The school fully accepts that whilst age limits apply to the vast majority of social media platforms, it is possible that these may not always be complied with. The school sees it as the joint responsibility of the school and parents to educate pupils on online safety and for parents to take all reasonable steps to ensure their child is not accessing inappropriate platforms when using devices outside of school.

If pupils are posting on social media, the school expects the following:

- Posted content should not include anything offensive about the school, its staff, parents, governors, or other pupils;
- Pupils must report anything offensive or upsetting that they see online and speak to their parents or a member of staff so that steps can be taken to report to the platforms if deemed appropriate;
- If pupils see inappropriate postings by other pupils, they must inform the school so that steps can be taken to avoid possible repercussions.

CYBER BULLYING

Mersea Island School is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, parents/carers and pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Cyber bullying methods could include text messages, emails, phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on websites, blogs or in chat rooms. Personal blogs that refer to staff, governors, parents or carers without their consent are also unacceptable. Those who commit cyberbullying could face criminal prosecution, under various laws, including the Malicious Communications Act 1988.

PERSONAL USE OF THE INTERNET

Mersea Island School does not allow personal use of the internet during session times.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

If necessary, action will be taken against any member of staff or governor who is found to have breached this policy in line with our Code of Conduct.

SECURITY AND IDENTITY THEFT

Staff, governors, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if they are part of a 'network'. Staff, governors, parents and carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Staff, governors, parents and carers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out.

This policy/document was reviewed by: Governing Board

Date: 15th May 2023

This policy will be reviewed every two years. Next review date: May 2025