



STOCKPORT SCHOOL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other peoples' lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia*.
- While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Stockport School staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.
- It is crucial that pupils, parents 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.
- Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

SCOPE

- This policy applies to Stockport School governing body, all teaching and other staff, external contractors providing services on behalf of the school, 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.
- This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school.
- This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *MySpace*), blogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopedias 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.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Stockport 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 1998.

- Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:
 - Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
 - Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
 - School business or corporate records containing organisational or publicly sensitive information
 - Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and politically sensitive information.
- 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.
- Stockport 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 Stockport School liable to the injured party.

RELATED POLICIES

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:
 - Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Acceptable Use

PRINCIPLES – *BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL*

- 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.
- You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Stockport School into disrepute.
- You must not represent your personal views as those of Stockport School on any social medium.
- You must not discuss personal information about pupils, Stockport School staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.
- You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, Stockport School.
- You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of Stockport School.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Stockport 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.
- Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from Stockport School or any other school, unless the pupils are family members. Staff may not be friends with any ex-student until they reach the age of 18.

- Stockport School does not expect 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.
- Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school and through official school sites created according to the requirements specified in section 7 and Appendix A.
- Staff members must decline "friend requests" from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become "friends" of the official school site.
- On leaving Stockport School service, staff members must not contact Stockport School pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues and other parties and school corporate information must not be discussed on their personal webspace.
- Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school uniforms or clothing with school logos or images identifying sensitive school premises must not be published on personal webspace.
- School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopedias 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.
- Stockport School Corporate, Service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal webspace.

Stockport School only permits limited personal use of social media while at work. Access to social media sites for personal reasons is not allowed between normal working hours with the exception of specified break and lunch times. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties and, in practice, 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 work place.

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.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF STOCKPORT SCHOOL

- Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.
- There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.
- Official school sites must be created only according to the requirements specified in Appendix A of this Policy. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.
- Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

MONITORING OF INTERNET USE

- Stockport School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.
- Users of Stockport 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.
- Staff should be aware that the use of the school internet and/or email services for private or personal financial gain or otherwise is strictly forbidden.

BREACHES OF THE POLICY

- Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Stockport School Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Stockport School or any illegal acts or acts that render Stockport School liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- Stockport School reserves the right to investigate and act upon third party information relating to the inappropriate misuse of social media by its staff members.
- Contracted providers of Stockport School services must inform the school Network Manager 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.

APPENDIX A

Requirements for creating social media sites on behalf of Stockport School

A.1 CREATION OF SITES

- Staff members participating in social media for work purposes are expected to demonstrate the same high standards of behaviour as when using other media or giving public presentations on behalf of Stockport School.
- Prior to creating a site, careful consideration must be given to the purposes for using social media and whether the overall investment is likely to be worthwhile for achieving the proposed pedagogical outcome.
- The proposed audience and level of interactive engagement with the site, for example whether pupils, school staff or members of the public will be able to contribute content to the site, must be discussed with the school's member of SLT with responsibility for Communications or the Headteacher.
- Staff members must consider how much time and effort they are willing to commit to the proposed site. They should be aware that maintaining a site is not a one-off task, but involves a considerable time commitment.
- Senior and/or Middle Leaders must take overall responsibility to ensure that enough resources are provided to keep the site refreshed and relevant. It is important that enough staff members are trained and are able to maintain and moderate a site in case of staff absences or turnover.
- There must be a careful exit strategy and a clear plan from the outset about how long the site will last. It must not be neglected, creating a potential risk to the school's brand and image.
- Consideration must also be given to how the success of the site will be evaluated to assess whether the site has achieved the proposed objectives.

A.2 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- When creating social media sites for children and young people and communicating with them using such sites, staff members must at all times be conscious of their responsibilities; staff must always act in the best interests of children and young people.
- When creating sites for children and young people, staff members must be alert to the risks to which young people can be exposed. Young people's technical knowledge may far exceed their social skills and awareness – they may post sensitive personal information about themselves, treat online "friends" as real friends, be targets for "grooming" or become victims of cyberbullying.
- If children and young people disclose information or display behaviour or are exposed to information or behaviour on these sites that raises safeguarding or other concerns, appropriate authorities must be informed immediately. Failure to do so could expose vulnerable young people to risk of harm.
- Staff members must ensure that the sites they create or contribute to for work purposes conform to the *Good Practice Guidance for the Providers of Social Networking and Other User Interactive Services* (Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet, 2008)
- Staff members must also ensure that the webspace they create on third party sites comply with the site owner's minimum age requirements (this is often set at 13 years). Staff members must also consider the ramifications and possibilities of children under the minimum age gaining access to the site.
- Care must be taken to ensure that content is suitable for the target age group and contributors or „friends“ to the site are vetted.
- Careful thought must be given to the profile of young people when considering creating sites for them. For example, the internet may not be the best medium to communicate with vulnerable young people (or indeed any age group) receiving confidential and sensitive services from the school. It may not be possible to maintain confidentiality, particularly on third-party-hosted sites such as social networking sites, where privacy settings may not be strong enough to prevent breaches of confidentiality, however inadvertent. If in doubt, you must seek advice from your Line Manager.

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed regularly on a two yearly basis in order to reflect and respond to changes in the social media/ICT world.

Last Reviewed: January 2026

Review date – January 2028