

Social Media Policy

Low Ash Primary School



Approved by:	The Governing Body	15.7.26
Last reviewed on:	16.07.2025	
Next review due by:	Summer 2027	

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Introduction

At Low Ash Primary School, we recognise that the internet provides employees with opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as, but not limited to Facebook, X (previously known as Twitter) and various sites on which you may blog. However, employees use of social media can pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information and reputation and can in some instances jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations.

To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used appropriately, we expect employees to adhere to this policy.

1. Scope and Purpose of the Policy

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, X (previously known as Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, Wikipedia, TikTok, all other social networking sites and all other internet postings, including blogs.

It applies to the use of social media for both school and personal purposes, whether during school hours or otherwise and applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal in serious cases. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigations into the matter, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

2. Personnel Responsible for Implementing the Policy

Members of the school senior leadership team have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to a member of your senior leadership team. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to a member of your senior leadership team.

3. Compliance with Related Policies and Agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;
- breach our disciplinary policy;
- defame or disparage the school or its affiliates, business partners, suppliers, pupils, parents, carers or other stakeholders;
- harass or bully other staff in any way;

- breach our Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion Policy;
- breach our Data Protection (GDPR) Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague, pupil, carer etc. online); and
- breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements).

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. Such references, positive or negative, can be attributed to the school and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the School.

Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of their employment.

4. Personal Use of Social Media (staff and pupils)

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time (whether by work or personal devices) or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communication systems.

No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day and advice is shared with parents and pupils that no pupils under the age of 13 should be accessing social networking sites.

In the presence of children, all staff mobile phones should be switched off and out of sight.

5. Monitoring

The contents of our IT resources and communications systems are our property. Staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems.

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other use of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

We may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

You must not use our IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you wish to be kept private or confidential from the School.

6. Responsible use of Social Media

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking accounts. It is important that they protect their professional reputation, and that of the school, by ensuring that they use their personal sites in an appropriate manner. As a minimum, all privacy settings should be set to 'friends only', irrespective of use/purpose.

Your online reputation is the perception, estimation and opinion that is formed when you are encountered online. This could be when someone visits your social networking profile, but could also be when anyone reads a comment you posted on another profile. It could also be when someone sees your online photo albums or an image with you in it, indeed any instance or reference of you that either you posted or someone else did - what your digital footprint says about you.

Your online reputation will be formed through:

- Posts by you
- Posts by others but about you or linked to you
- Posts by others pretending to be you

Staff are advised as follows:

- i) That they do not conduct or portray themselves, or allow friends to portray them, in a manner in which may:
 - a) Bring the school into disrepute.
 - b) Lead to valid parental complaints.
 - c) Be deemed as derogatory towards the school and/or its employees and suppliers
 - d) Be deemed as derogatory towards pupils (past or present), parents/carers or governors, other affiliates or stakeholders
 - e) Bring into question their appropriateness to work with children
 - f) Contravene current National Teacher Standards

Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our reputation, even indirectly.

They should not post or display words or pictures that violate the law or the Schools' policies against discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on race, gender, colour, disability, national origin, age, religion, union affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression or statuses or activities otherwise protected by law or School policy.

Staff should not post or display words or pictures that are known to be false about colleagues, pupils, parents, carers or other stakeholders, or acting with reckless disregard for the truth of such words or pictures

Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Posts should be written in the first person and a personal email address used when communicating via social media.

Staff are personally responsible for what is communicated on social media. What is published might be available to read by the public at large (including the school itself, future employees and social acquaintances) for a long time.

If affiliation as an employee of Low Ash Primary school is disclosed, it must be stated that shared views do not represent those of the employer. For example, staff could state, “the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer”. Staff should also ensure that their profile and any content posted are consistent with the professional image which should be presented to parents, carers and colleagues.

No comments should be made about sensitive topics, such as school’s performance. Even if it is clear that views on such topics do not represent those of the school, comments could still damage the school’s reputation.

If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement of posting, refrain from making the communication until it is discussed with a line manager.

If staff see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on our school or our stakeholders, they should contact their line manager. All staff are responsible for protecting the school’s reputation

All social media accounts created on behalf of the school must be approved by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher in advance.

If staff are contacted for comments about the School for publication anywhere, including any social media outlet, the inquiry should be directed to the Headteacher and responses not made without approval.

7. Respecting Colleagues, Pupils, Parents and Carers

Nothing should be posted that colleagues, pupils, parents, carers or other stakeholders would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

Nothing should be posted related to colleagues, pupils, parent, carers or other stakeholders without their written permission, or that of an appropriate adult.

Staff should not make friends, follow or otherwise directly engage with any pupils, past (under the age of 18) or present, on social media sites as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised, and/or safeguarding allegations being raised.

Staff should not form online friendships (unless these are pre-established friendships), accept friendship requests or enter into communication with parents/carers as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised.

8. Comments posted by Parents/Carers on Social Media Sites

Parents/ cares will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding the use of social media via this policy, the school website, letters and newsletters.

Parents / carers are asked:

- not to post images (photos and videos) of pupils other than their own children on social media sites unless they have the permission of the parents of other children in the pictures.
- to raise queries, concerns or complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media sites.

- not to post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about any member of the school community.

Any breach of this will lead to the parent being contacted and a request made for the post to be removed immediately.

In the event of repeated incidents of online misconduct, Low Ash reserve the right to forward relevant information and details to the police.

9. Cyber Bullying

All cases of online bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy.

- The school can take action with reference to any incident which takes place outside of school hours if it:
- Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school
- Poses a threat to member of the school community
- Could adversely affect the reputation of the school, or its employees / governors

Any instances of cyber bullying will automatically be reported to the parent / carer and recommendations given with regards to the closure of pupil accounts.

10. Safeguarding

If any member of staff becomes aware of any materials on social media sites which compromise the safeguarding of pupils or staff members they should inform their line manager immediately and follow guidelines set out in the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

The Education Act 2002 places a duty on schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school by ensuring that risks of harm to welfare are minimised and taking appropriate actions to address concerns about the welfare of a child or children, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other agencies.

The Social Media Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy – where concerns arise regarding safeguarding and/or child protection, these should be recorded in writing, signed and dated, and passed on to one of the Safeguarding Team (Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputies).

11. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

The Governing Body shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Signed..... Chair of Governors

Signed..... Headteacher