



Policy Title	Social Media Policy				
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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues; child sexual exploitation and predation; radicalization: technology often provides a platform that facilitates harm. An effective approach to online safety empowers a school or college to protect and educate the whole school or college community in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any incident where appropriate.

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

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

The widespread availability and use of social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Instant Messaging, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter etc., 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 our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. To capture the benefits offered by social media, the school may explore and implement its use for school improvement and educational purposes.

Stanford Lake College depends on both our staff and pupils as our most important asset. Working in a school requires all employees and pupils to maintain professional boundaries in all forms of communication, regardless of whether or not it involves electronic or digital technology. This is vital to maintain public trust and appropriate professional relationships with pupils and staff. Our conduct inside or outside of the school environment should not lead pupils or staff to blur or cross those professional boundaries. It is also necessary to want to empower employees to assist parents, pupils and customers posing questions and queries relating to our school on social media.

This policy and the principles set out below are to help employees, pupils, parents and other individuals connected with Stanford Lake College avoid the 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. It is important that the guidelines outlined in



this document are adhered to.

2. RATIONALE (WHY WE HAVE A POLICY)

This document applies to all pupils, staff (including agency/supply staff), volunteers, board members or anyone working within the school and using the school's systems and equipment whether on or off the premises. The policy will also apply to former employees.

The policy and principles should be read in conjunction with the School's policies on *Acceptable Use of IT Policy* and the *Staff and Pupil Code of Conduct*.

Stanford Lake College recognises that its employees, pupils and parents engage on a number of social media platforms. These applications include, but are not limited to, WhatsApp (and other instant messaging services), Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, Blogs, and other online tools through which people connect and share information. Employees are encouraged to use social media as a way of sharing and discussing positive College news. This social media policy is designed to provide a guide to expected conduct when referencing Stanford Lake College on social media.

All members of the Stanford Lake College community are expected to uphold the values of the school in all social media interactions at all times. Staff, pupils and parents will not act in such a way that the image of Stanford Lake College is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms members of the school community.

Therefore, it is expected that Stanford Lake College employees, pupils and parents use social media in a respectful and responsible manner. Social Media must not be used to insult, present offensive or inappropriate content or to misrepresent Stanford Lake College or any member of the school community.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA – WHAT IS IT?

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It means electronic communication software, applications (including those running on mobile devices including texting, SMS, instant messaging and videos), e-mail and websites, which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online. Examples include, but are not limited to, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, as well as online discussion forums, blogs, other and the use of webcams. All members of the school community 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 other legislation. All staff and pupils must also operate in line with the school's *IT Acceptable Use Policies*.

4. AIMS

The aim of Stanford Lake College's Social Media Policy is to set standards of behaviour for the use of Social Media that are consistent with the values and expectations of Stanford Lake College. Stanford Lake College aims to protect the safety and wellbeing of pupils, teachers and the school community. If, however, there is a breach of the school's Social Media Policy, the school will



undertake disciplinary action. This disciplinary action will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Rights and Responsibilities

Staff, pupils and parents are expected to show respect to all members of the school community.

Staff will: Plan for the inclusion of cyber safety awareness within the curriculum with guidance from relevant education authorities.

Parents should: Be responsible for being aware of and informed about their children's online activity and be proactive in the supervision and guidance of their children taking into account this policy and, in particular, the school's core values.

PUPIL GUIDELINES

When using social media, pupils are expected to ensure:

- That they read and agree to the terms and conditions of social media sites as many of them have age restrictions for their use. e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Gmail are all restricted to those 13 years of age and above.
- They are fully aware of what they are posting online and know that Social Media sites and applications are public forums.
- They are not permitted to attempt to access a staff member's areas on networking sites.
- They will not access social networking sites during the school working day unless stipulated by their teachers and exclusively for academic purposes.
- They respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- They do not impersonate or falsely represent another member of the school community.
- They do not bully, intimidate, abuse, harass or threaten other members of the school community.
- They do not partake in any racist or discriminatory behaviour of any kind.
- They do not use offensive or threatening language or resort to personal abuse, blackmail or hate speech towards each other or members of the school community.
- They do not harm the reputation of Stanford Lake College or those within its community.
- They do not upload video, audio or photographs of any member of the Stanford Lake College community (student, parents, guardians, carers or staff) without the express permission of the individual/s concerned.
- They do not upload any video or photographs of any pupil where they can be identified as a Stanford Lake College pupil by their uniform or any other means.

STAFF AND TEACHER GUIDELINES

Social media in relation to employees relates to blogs, wikis, podcasts, digital images and video, instant messaging and mobile devices.

Members of staff 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, pupils at the school, their families and other stakeholders and/or working partners of the school.
- Disclose confidential information without express authority especially about pupils,



parents or carers, fellow staff members, volunteers or other workers at the school nor breach their right to privacy.

- Maintain professional standards by communicating with pupil and parents/guardians/carers electronically at appropriate times of the day and through established education platforms (for example, a web page dedicated to school programs, projects or classes rather than via a personal profile).
- Maintain proper professional boundaries with pupils, parents, fellow staff members and guardians even when said individuals initiate electronic interaction.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with pupils and parents/guardians/carers.
- Maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with pupils to ensure that all professional boundaries are maintained.
- Any information that you acquire during your job is confidential unless stated otherwise and you are not permitted to share it online.
- If posting an item about an aspect of the school, for which one has express permission, make it clear that any personal views are not necessarily those of the school. Staff are personally responsible for content they publish online. Staff need to be mindful that what they publish will be in the public domain permanently.
- 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 type of personal social media account.
- Staff and pupil online interaction must occur only in an educational context.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are often blurred in the online world. If staff identify themselves online as affiliated with Stanford Lake College, then they need to be aware that they are by definition representing the entire school community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the school and the school's values and ethos.
- Staff should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the Stanford Lake College community and its members.
- Staff should visit their profile's security and privacy settings on social networking sites. At a minimum, staff should have all privacy settings set to 'only friends'.
- Engage in activities which compromise, or might be seen to compromise, the professional standards of teaching or the professional standards applicable to support staff.

PARENT GUIDELINES

Classroom blogs and other social media tools open up communication between pupils, parents and staff. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a significant impact on learning at Stanford Lake College. The school encourages parents to participate in such activities when appropriate but requests that parents act responsibly and respectfully at all times, understanding that their conduct not only reflects on the school community, but will be a model for our pupils as well.

Parents should:

- Be aware that many social media sites have age restrictions that **DO HAVE** implications for their children. Parents need to monitor their children's online social media activity, and carefully read the terms and conditions of various Social Media sites and applications their children are interested in using. Parents need to be aware that many



of them have age restrictions for their use. e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Gmail are all restricted to those **13 years of age and above**.

- Be aware that they are in breach of terms and conditions if they set up a personal account for their children to use if they knowingly understand that age restrictions apply.
- Before uploading photos, audio or video, parents need to seek appropriate permission from any individual involved. This most particularly applies in relation to the privacy of all of those concerned with Stanford Lake College.
- Online postings and conversations are not private. Parents must not share confidential information, internal school discussions, or specific information about pupils, staff or other parents.
- Be conscious of the fact that expert advice given is that all users of social media sites should do whatever they can to not identify any child by name or associate them with a particular school.
- Parents should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the Stanford Lake College community and its members and should know that the consequences of doing this could result in legal action being taken.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

Manage the privacy and security settings of your social media accounts.

Privacy settings can shift and change without notice. Check the settings, rules and regulations 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 pupils 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 etc., which can form the basis of security questions and passwords and enable personal details to be cloned for fraudulent acts etc. and grooming.
- If staff do come into contact with any negative posts regarding Stanford Lake College online, they are strongly encouraged to keep the school in the loop regarding this. That being said, we ask that staff leave the responding to this comment to the social media experts and marketing department of Stanford Lake College. This will prevent any employee coming under pressure when answering a query or getting into a heated discussion.

5. KEY PRINCIPLES WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support pupil learning. For

example, the school has an official Twitter, Facebook and Instagram account and courses may require the use of blogs for assessment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupils' learning. However, when using social media, the boundaries between professional and personal can become more blurred and users can wittingly or



unwittingly publish things that they may later regret. Published items can be capable of more than one interpretation but once published the damage may not be recoverable.

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. The following activities must NOT be undertaken:

- 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 or religious hatred or similar activities – these may lead to criminal investigations and penalties.
- Posting libelous 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.
- When using social media platforms, it is important to remember that everyone who has contributed to the dissemination of defamatory content may be held liable for defamations. This includes social media users who share, like or retweet defamatory comments posted by others, whether on WhatsApp and other social media channels. Furthermore, individuals who fail to distance themselves from defamatory or otherwise inappropriate posts can also be held liable.
- So-called “name and shame” posts may constitute an invasion of privacy, cyber-bullying and even defamation.
- 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 pupils, staff, board members, 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, board member, 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 to share information.
- The school takes the matters above seriously and disciplinary action will be taken. A very serious view will also be taken of any individual who does this, or similar, who ignores or willfully 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 pupil similar examples in this policy.
- Online conduct is governed by the same laws as offline conduct and the law of defamation protects rights to privacy, dignity and reputation and balances the right to unimpaired reputation with the right to free expression. Overstepping the right to free expression may render the author liable for defamation.

MANAGING CHANGE AND ISSUES ARISING

- We acknowledge that technology changes rapidly. If any member of the Stanford Lake



College community has a concern or question pertaining to social media or social networking sites, this should be directed to the School's Senior Management Team.

- Parents, pupils or staff who have a complaint or issue arise from social media should contact the headmaster directly.

6. DEALING WITH INAPPROPRIATE CONTACT OR MATERIAL/COMMENTS

All reports of cyber bullying and other technology misuse will be investigated fully. These will be dealt with in

line with the school code of conduct.

If an individual becomes aware of inappropriate material/comments he/she should notify the Deputy Head of Discipline as soon as possible, and, if possible, provide print outs or other such evidence of the comments made.

If a pupil or a member of staff makes 'social' or inappropriate contact with an employee or person, the individual must notify a member of the Senior Management Team as soon as possible. The school can then deal with the situation as appropriate.

7. MONITORING OF INTERNET AND MOBILE DEVICES ACCESS

The school's *IT Acceptable Use Policy* details information on monitoring and filtering. Electronic devices are permitted on campus (as per our Mobile Device Policy) with the understanding that, in the case of reasonable suspicion of inappropriate content or use, they may be checked in the presence of the owner and that, should inappropriate use or offensive content to be found, the evidence may be used in subsequent hearings.

Please refer to the school's *IT Acceptable Use Policy* for more information.

8. 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 pupils or work colleagues.

When using social media, individuals 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 unauthorized 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 the following before posting information or images on social networking sites:



Stanford Lake College



- Think carefully before posting information – would you want the person concerned or your employer or potential employer to see it?
- 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.