



HELSEBY HILLSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1. Introduction

Social media is changing the way we exchange knowledge, opinions and ideas, by opening up new opportunities for communication, for individuals and for organisations, including schools.

Helsby Hillside Primary School understands that many, if not all, employees will have a social media presence; and trusts that staff will use this responsibly and not in a way that could cause a detriment to the school, its staff, pupils, parents, governors and the local community.

The aim of this Policy and Guidance document is to set out the expectations of the school with regard to the use of social media by employees, both in an official capacity (i.e., publishing on social media on behalf of the school) and in private postings. The policy and guidelines therefore aim to provide employees with information to make responsible decisions whilst making the most of the technology.

This policy applies to all employees at Helsby Hillside Primary School. The policy also applies to any workers e.g. agency workers, casual workers, volunteers or other third parties who are associated with the School and who may / may not have access to electronic communications.

For the purpose of this Policy and Guidance document, the term “social media” refers to all types of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other, or to share data in a public forum. “Social media” can be referenced in a variety of ways, often depending on which sector is discussing it. Other terms which may be used in a similar context include “social software”, “social computing” and “Web 2.0”. For convenience the term “social media” is used throughout this document.

Well known examples include Facebook, X, SnapChat, What’sApp, Tiktok, LinkedIn and Instagram as well as blog sites, on-line encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia; and video / image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. However employees should be aware that this list is not exhaustive, there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow this guidance in relation to any social media that they use.

2. Policy

2.1 Business Use

Helsby Hillside Primary School encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work. It is an important part of how the school promotes its services.

School will, if appropriate, appoint an employee (or number of employees) to the specific task of updating social media sites on behalf of school e.g. with updates on school events, or information for parents. Any employee wishing to post information on social media on the school's behalf should either refer the task to an appropriately delegated individual, or seek guidance / approval from the appropriate person before doing so.

Employees must be aware at all times that, if contributing to the school's social media activities, they are representing the school. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the principles as set out in the Guidelines, below.

2.2 Personal Use

Helsby Hillside Primary School recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. Employees must be aware that inappropriate activity on social media can be potentially damaging to the school if they are recognised as being a school employee.

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must therefore adhere to the principles as set out in the Guidelines, below.

Employees are reminded to ensure their personal privacy settings are appropriate e.g. that your postings are only visible to those people who you have designated as "friends". Please refer to the social media provider's guidance on how to do this, as it will differ across applications.

Whilst in work, school employees are allowed limited access to social media websites for personal use from the school's computers/devices or using their own equipment, in their own time and in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emerging Technologies

Helsby Hillside Primary School recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, including generative AI tools, can support learning, administration and communication when used appropriately. However, staff must use AI responsibly, professionally and in a manner that safeguards pupils, colleagues and the reputation of the school.

The use of AI must always comply with the school's safeguarding responsibilities, data protection requirements, confidentiality expectations and professional standards of conduct.

3.1 Staff Responsibilities

Employees must:

- Use AI tools in a way that supports their professional duties and responsibilities.
- Exercise professional judgement when reviewing any content generated by AI systems.
- Check all AI-generated content for accuracy, suitability, bias and appropriateness before use or publication.
- Ensure that decisions affecting pupils, staff or families are not based solely on AI-generated information.
- Follow the school's Data Protection Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Safeguarding Policy when using AI technologies.
- Clearly understand that they remain responsible for all content they create, edit, share or publish, regardless of whether AI has been used to generate it.

Employees must not:

- Input confidential, sensitive or personally identifiable information relating to pupils, parents, carers, staff or governors into public AI systems unless specifically authorised and compliant with data protection requirements.
- Use AI tools to generate, modify or distribute content that could be misleading, defamatory, discriminatory, offensive or harmful.
- Use AI to impersonate another individual or create misleading communications on behalf of the school.
- Upload photographs, videos, voice recordings or other identifying materials of pupils or staff into AI systems without appropriate authorisation and lawful basis.
- Use AI-generated content in a way that breaches copyright, intellectual property rights or licensing requirements.

3.2 AI-Generated Images, Audio and Video

Staff must be particularly cautious when using AI-generated or AI-modified images, audio and video.

- AI-generated content must not be presented as authentic evidence where this could mislead others.
- Any use of AI-generated media for educational, marketing or communication purposes must be factually accurate and appropriate for a school setting.
- Staff should report any concerns regarding manipulated images, deepfakes or synthetic media affecting pupils, staff or the school to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

3.3 Safeguarding and Pupil Protection

Staff must remain vigilant to risks associated with AI, including:

- Deepfake images, audio or video.
- Online scams and impersonation.
- AI-generated misinformation or harmful content.
- Inappropriate use of AI by pupils or adults.

Any safeguarding concerns involving AI-generated material should be managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

3.4 Use of AI in Official School Communications

Where AI is used to assist with drafting communications, reports, policies, newsletters or social media content:

- Staff must review and edit all content before publication.
- Content must be checked for factual accuracy, tone and compliance with school policies.
- Responsibility for the final published content remains with the member of staff approving it.

4 Monitoring

Helsby Hillside Primary School reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage on school IT equipment, and will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. Valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- Been using social media websites when he/she should be working; or
- Acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this Policy and Guidance document.

The organisation reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of one year.

Certain sites or content may be blocked by the School as they are deemed inappropriate for a school setting.

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

5 Use of Social Media in Recruitment

Inline with Keeping children Safe in Education (KCSIE) as part of the shortlisting process schools and colleges should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school or college might want to explore with the applicant at interview.

Breach of the Policy

All employees are required to adhere to this policy and should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to action under the School's Disciplinary Procedure. Employees should be aware that their external activities, which may come to light through social media, may impact on their role in the School. This is especially true if it is clear from a person's profile that they work at Helsby Hillside Primary School; however, even if the School is not named as the employer, comments can still be deemed to reflect on the school as it is assumed that many people reading those comments / seeing images etc will be aware of the employee's connection to the school.

Serious breaches of this policy may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal. Examples of serious breaches include:

- Incidents of bullying of colleagues,
- Breaches of privacy of children at the school,
- Offensive language / threats to parents, staff, governors or members of the public,
- Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content,
- Making defamatory comments about individuals, organisations or groups,

- Any other social media activity which could be seen as causing serious damage to the school's reputation.

This list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

Employees can, to an extent, prevent misunderstandings by ensuring that their privacy settings only allow content to be accessed by "friends"; however employees should always be aware that if anyone is offended by what they have posted, this can be reported and any link with school, deliberate or not, could constitute misconduct or even gross misconduct.

6. Staff Mentions in Social Media

Helsby Hillside Primary School has a duty to take reasonable care in relation to the health and safety of its employees and the basic steps set out in this guidance should apply in all cases where an employee is subject to abuse via social media.

Helsby Hillside Primary School reserves the right to monitor social media for inappropriate activity referencing the school, and also for mentions of staff. Where "staff mentions" are picked up, either through monitoring or by another employee / parent / governor etc., it should be reported to the [Headteacher / Business Manager / other appropriate person] as soon as possible so that it can be raised with the member of staff affected and appropriate support offered.

The range of responses may include one or more of the following and should be considered on a case by case basis;

- Contacting the police where the posting is threatening
- Contacting the hosting service to request the removal of a posting
- Legal action where postings are particularly abusive and sustained over a period of time

The member of staff affected must be kept informed about what action is being taken and why some types of action are not being pursued. It is important to show that all the issues have been considered and responded to appropriately.

See also

- Online Safety (E-Safety) Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Approved by	Headteacher
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