

Victoria Primary School

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. Social media is a term given to online media/websites that are based on user participation and user-generated content. It can be categorised into the main areas of blogs, social networks, forums, wikis, online communities and podcasts.

1.2. Victoria Primary School is committed to communicating with its stakeholders in a professional, transparent and honest way. It endeavours to make its communication a two-way process, encouraging stakeholders to share their views and listening to its stakeholders' opinions. The use of social media as a communications and customer relations tool is encouraged.

1.3. The school respects the legal rights of employees and, by and large, what you do on your own time is your concern. However, actions in or outside work that affect your work performance, the work of others, or the school's interests are a suitable focus for school policy.

1.4. This policy covers employee and Governor responsibilities when using social media either for personal or professional use and should be read in conjunction with other school policies. It is intended to form part of the staff handbook and will be covered as part of the induction process.

2. Using social media outside work

2.1 When creating a profile on a social media platform, refrain from declaring Victoria Primary School as your place of work. In stating it as your place of work, then you are declaring yourself a representative and you must act appropriately. The image you project could have a negative impact on the school and its reputation. **If you wish to state your employer then please just use 'teacher', and if needs must 'Vale of Glamorgan'.**

2.2 Consider using a disclaimer. When using social media you must make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the school. Avoid using school email addresses, the school logo or other school identification on personal accounts. Where possible, use a standard disclaimer such as: 'Please note that these are my personal views, not my employer's'. This should be displayed clearly on your profile.

2.3 When using Facebook it is advisable to amend your privacy settings to high and customise them to ensure that your 'wall posts' and 'photo albums' are not visible to the general public. There have been incidences nationally of teachers' photos being used by parents negatively, avoid this happening by considering the content before posting and avoid 'tagging' members of staff. When using twitter, set your account to private in order to prevent anyone unknown to you seeing your tweets.

2.4 Think carefully before you type. Writing negative or critical posts about the school can be damaging so use discretion at all times. If you are unsure whether your content may compromise the school in any way, speak with your Head Teacher first.

2.5 Remember who your audience is. You are potentially connected to other school staff, parents, governors and other stakeholders through social media, as well as the rest of the world. Make sure the image you project is consistent with your position in the school. **In order to comply with this, we advise you do not 'friend' parents on Facebook or twitter. No members of staff should have a pupil as a 'friend', it compromises your professionalism. (Further to this, no child under the age of 13 should be signed up to social media sites as that is a breach of the American legislation under which they have been created.)**

2.6 Be aware of your obligations to other school policies such as data protection and the acceptable use policy – don't reveal or discuss confidential information or anything that could be damaging to your employer.

2.7 If a member of the press or media tries to make contact with you about a matter relating to your work or the school, please speak with the Chair of Governors first before responding.

2.8 Be nice – treat others on social media as you would in real life. Negative comments won't do you or the school any good and are never appropriate.

2.9 If in any doubt, check with the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors.

3. Using social media as a communication tool at work

3.1 Social media provides a unique opportunity for the school to participate in conversations, share information and promote itself on a local and global scale.

3.2 The school encourages two-way conversation with others, including stakeholders, other organisations and businesses, where relevant and appropriate. This supports and contributes to the school's aim of openness and increasing transparency.

3.3 Employees should not use social media for school business without appropriate authorisation. Any school employee wishing to use social media to communicate on behalf of the school must first get permission from their Head Teacher.

4 Guidance for employees using social media for school business

4.1 Abide by school codes. The same codes apply to online activity as do in your general working life. Users must be aware of, and abide by the schools conditions of employment and policies.

4.2 Follow copyright and data protection laws. Laws such as libel, defamation, copyright and data protection all apply online. For the school's protection, as well as your own, it's imperative that you conduct your behaviour appropriately. If writing on internal/sensitive school matters, seek permission before publishing. If you share content created by others, for

example photographs or videos, always get written permission. If you don't know who created the media then you must not use it – it might be liable to copyright. It's vital that staff and Governors understand data protection and the importance of not revealing personal data. The definition of 'personal data' is a wide field, but in the main part consists of information that can lead to the identification of others – directly, or if linked with other information. You should never post information that could potentially identify others (for example, 'tagging' staff in status updates and photos on Facebook). If you were found guilty of breaching the data protection act you, and the school, could face a hefty fine.

4.3 Be aware of the longevity of information online. Be aware that all information that you publish on the Internet has the potential to be viewed forever.

4.4 Exercise caution when using applications. Some applications on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook (such as widgets) require you to confirm access to your account. These applications often have a disclaimer that states they can access your account and post on your behalf – this often manifests in auto-updates when using the applications and can often be misconstrued as advertising. Please refrain from using these.

4.5 Be open about who you are. If you are blogging, contributing to sites or forums, or creating multimedia content on behalf of the school then you're encouraged to be clear about who you are, use your real name, and identify that you work for the school. However, be careful not to reveal too much information. Sharing some details of your life can help you to build a relationship with your followers, but it can also put you at risk of identity theft. It might seem obvious, but never give out address, financial or other personal details.

4.6 Deal with offensive comments quickly and sensitively. If an offensive, threatening or libellous comment is posted then you have the right to remove it, however do leave an explanation as to why you have done so.

4.7 Deal with persistent complainants publicly. The purpose of social media is to discuss opinions and encourage two-way conversations, however not everyone will always agree. You may encounter persistent complainants who use social media to highlight what they feel is a personal issue or injustice. Always speak with your Head Teacher before responding. Make the effort to speak with the person publicly at first – offer them a chance to share their concerns – so that your other followers can see that you're willing to offer help. Make sure you follow up on your promises. If the situation doesn't improve please speak with the Head Teacher for further advice. Always be courteous in everything you write in any social media forum – just as you would in a letter.

4.8 Make sure what you post is factual and be honest and upfront about your mistakes. Before posting any information, make sure that it's factual, correct and truthful. If you post something in error and choose to delete it then be honest and admit why you've done so. If editing a blog post be clear that the latest version has been amended.

Remember, you ultimately have responsibility over what you've published so make sure you get it right. If you have any concerns then speak with your Head Teacher or Chair of Governors first.

4.9 Remember your principal role. Social media presents a fantastic opportunity for schools to develop close relationships with the public; however it is always an addition to your principle role. You must manage it within your current job role and not allow it to impact on the requirements of your daily role.