SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

To be approved by the governing body SPRING 2025

This policy will be reviewed in the academic year Autumn 2026

OAKFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

October 2025

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction:

Oakfield Primary School is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. Some with the widest use are Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok & Twitter.

Oakfield Primary School is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to maintain high standards of education. These tools also enable Oakfield Primary School to deliver modern effective services through engagement with the wider Oakfield Primary School community. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new 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 reputation.

We use the term 'social media' to describe any kind of web based tool that you can use for sharing what you know, including, but not limited to: blogs, photo's, video's, social networks, mobile phone applications, text, e-mail, digital TV services, wikis, gaming and collaboration tools. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This policy will extend to governors and other members of the wider school community as appropriate.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the school is not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.

All school's representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are in private spaces, are still subject to copyright, GDPR and

Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

As Oakfield Primary School begins its social media journey it aspires to meet both current and future needs and expectations. Oakfield Primary School's use of social media will include:

- **Communication** – listen to users and their conversation about Oakfield Primary School issues.
- **Engagement** – participate in conversations, building dialogue with users through social media.
- **Employees** – encourage our employees to use social media to support the undertaking of their work duties and where appropriate share what they know and support each other in making the best use of social media.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR WORK

Oakfield Primary School would like its employees to feel confident when using social media and to achieve meaningful results through these activities. This policy has been developed to help employees understand good practice for online participation and to make clear the standards expected of anyone using social media.

- This policy is in addition to any professional standards that govern specific areas of work for employees and in addition to all other Oakfield Primary School policies.

- This policy should be followed in conjunction with any code of conduct, which describes the standards of conduct and practice that Oakfield Primary School's employees should follow.
The code is a key element in the employment relationship and therefore an integral part of the contract of employment.

- Social media should be seen as another communication channel in the same way as telephone and e-mail and therefore the same behaviour and activities should be observed. However, it is important to note that unlike telephone and e-mail exchange information posted on a social media site is publicly available.

- Furthermore, each employee using social media for work purposes must receive sufficient training and support.

Before using social media, you must have received the necessary permission from your Head teacher. This will detail which social media you can access during work time. You should then follow these guiding principles for any social media activities that are part of your work:

- **Be responsible for your actions**

Remember that you are a representative of Oakfield Primary School. Where possible you should disclose your position as a representative of Oakfield Primary School but consideration should be given to personal safety when doing so. Using social media on behalf of Oakfield Primary School means that you are responsible for your own actions and may be held accountable for these. Conduct

that is likely to bring discredit to Oakfield Primary School will be dealt with in accordance with Oakfield Primary School's disciplinary procedure.

- **Be respectful**

Set the tone for online messages and conversation by being polite, open and respectful. Use familiar language and be cordial and professional at all times. You must ensure that you respect people's confidentiality and do not disclose non-public information or the personal information of others. If you are unsure what information is in the public domain then always seek clarification before divulging anything.

- **Be responsive**

Make an effort to share information and offer insights where appropriate. Put people in touch with someone who can help if you are unable to. Respond to questions and comments in a timely manner, ensuring you meet the user's expectations for the type of social media you are using.

- **Be credible and consistent**

Ensure accuracy of information; be fair, thorough and transparent, Encourage constructive criticism and feedback.

- **Be confident**

Don't be scared of participating but if in doubt always seek further guidance before doing so. Never publish anything you are unsure about and be confident and clear in what you say.

- **Be integrated**

Wherever possible, align online participation with Oakfield Primary School's website and other offline communications e.g. Oakfield Primary School magazine/newsletter.

- **Be legal**

Remember the laws relating to defamation, copyright and GDPR apply when using social media (other laws may also apply). You should not make statements about other people or companies that could harm their reputation, and you should be careful not to copy the work of another person or company as this could be a breach of copyright laws. Personal information about other people should not be placed on social media as this is their information and any such disclosure of personal information could be a breach of the GDPR. The Oakfield Primary School can be held liable for your actions so if you are unsure about whether you are acting within the law you should seek further legal clarification.

- If you need advice about using social media in your work, then get in touch with others who can help you – the sooner the better. You can make good use of the expertise within Oakfield Primary School and learn from other people's experiences.

- Oakfield Primary School's social media business accounts are not to be used for personal reasons. Unauthorized entry into Oakfield Primary School's computer systems, unauthorized use of software or breach of the data protection requirements is a breach of Oakfield Primary School 's disciplinary rules.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- It is your own personal choice whether or not you participate in any kind of social media activity in your own time. Whilst the views and opinions you express are your own, as an employee you are still a representative of Oakfield Primary School and should be aware that any information that you post about Oakfield Primary School cannot be entirely separate from your working life.

- All employees using social media should be aware that what they say can be accessed around the world within seconds; it may be shared or re-published elsewhere and will continue to be available indefinitely. They should also be mindful that even if information is restricted to your 'friends'/followers' it is in effect public as you cannot control what they do with any information you post.

- Employees that make personal use of social media outside of work are advised not to identify their employer or role in order to avoid any confusion as to whether they are speaking as an employee or individual.

- You are personally responsible for anything you say online. You should follow these guiding principles when using social media in your own time:

- You should not identify Oakfield Primary School when using social media in a personal capacity if doing so would bring discredit to Oakfield Primary School. This could include making negative or derogatory remarks (directly or indirectly) about colleagues, your manager or your employer. This is a breach of Oakfield Primary School's disciplinary rules and may invoke action being taken against you.

- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.

- Do not request, or respond to any personal information from a child, ensuring that communication only takes place within clear and explicit professional boundaries through the school's own communication channels.

- Respect the privacy of others and make sure you don't publish any information that is confidential.

- Stay within the legal framework and be aware that defamation, copyright and privacy laws, amongst others, apply.

- Be aware that participating online in a personal capacity may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care.

- Make sure you avoid any misunderstanding about whether you are speaking as a representative of Oakfield Primary School or in a personal capacity.

- Add a disclaimer to your blog or social media profile to make it clear that your accounts and views are personal, e.g. "these views are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of Oakfield Primary School", if you have identified Oakfield Primary School as your employer.

- If in doubt, always seek advice.

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site.
- Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the head teacher.
- However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.
- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in school Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking.
- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites.
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- All pupil mobile phones must be handed into the office at the beginning of the school day, the Internet capability must be switched off.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Head teacher. Parents will be informed if this happens.
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day unless for direct school use (posting school information on the school Facebook page/Twitter).
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision.
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens.
- We have zero tolerance to cyber bullying.
- Child protection guidance – refer to if needed.
- If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their Child Protection Policy

- School will call on the expertise of local authority advisers, LGfL DigiSafe or Professionals' Online-Safety Helpline (from UK SIC).
- Schools must refer the matter to the North Lincolnshire Council Police Child Protection Team
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes
- If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality
- The LA will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given
- If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your Child Protection Policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

- **Cyber Bullying**

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Oakfield Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

- Parents should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites
- Where a disclosure of bullying is made schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school

This can be a complex area and these examples might help:

- A child is receiving taunts on Facebook and text from an ex pupil who moved three months ago - This is not a school responsibility, though the school might contact the new school to broker a resolution
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all on weekends using Facebook or texts. The pupil are in the school – The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families as they attend the school
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all on weekends using Facebook. The pupils are in year 5 – This is the tricky one. The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school. However, they are also fully within their rights to warn all the parents (including the victim) that they are condoning the use of Facebook outside the terms and conditions of the site and that they are expected to ensure that use of the site stops. At any further referral to the school, the school could legitimately say the victims and perpetrators had failed to follow the school's recommendation. They could then deal with residual bullying in the school, but refuse to deal with the social network issues
- Once disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school's adopted Anti-Bullying Policy
- If parent/carers refuse to engage and bullying continues it can be referred to the police as harassment
- This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying
- If a parent/carer is making threats online against a member of school staff this is counted as bullying. The member of staff must inform the Headteacher immediately and the parent/carer spoken to. Should the situation not be resolved the police and LA should be informed