Norton and West Chinnock Schools'

School Communication & Social Media Policy

School Communication

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents the information they need to support their child's education

- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents

- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents appropriately

- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours, or their working hours (if they work part-time).

In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times

- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance

- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner

- Checking all communications from the school

Parents can communicate with the school by:

Email

Parents should always email the **school office**, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

Norton: Norton.SH@nortonandwestchinnockschools.co.uk

West Chinnock: WestChinnock.Sch407@nortonandwestchinnockschools.co.uk

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office and the relevant member of staff will contact them.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office.

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

Norton: 01935 881815

West Chinnock: 01935 881367

Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email or call the school to book an appointment.

While teachers may be available at the beginning or end of the school day if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

Important, please note:

In order to ensure that all queries and communication is managed appropriately, parents are asked not to communicate with any member of staff regarding school issues through informal channels such as texts, WhatsApp or social media, even if the member of staff is a friend.

In line with the Staff Conduct Policy and Social Media Policy (below), all staff have been informed that they are not to respond to any communication from parents regarding school issues through these channels.

Social Media Policy

Norton and West Chinnock Schools recognise and embrace the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. While employees are encouraged to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media, they should also be aware that there are some associated risks, especially around issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation.

Purpose of the policy

- The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect the schools and employees, and to promote the effective use of social media as part of the schools' activities.
- This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by the school and its employees.
- The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the schools' IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- Personal communications via social media accounts that are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards or the schools' reputation are within the scope of this policy.
- This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full-time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees and agency workers.

Principles for Employees:

- Staff should be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional/school lives separate. They should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between the school and their personal interests;
- Staff should not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Norton and West Chinnock Primary Schools into disrepute;

Roles, responsibilities and procedure

Employees should:

- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils and colleagues on social media;
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies, i.e. those of the employer;
- be aware that any excessive and inappropriate use of social media in school/college may result in disciplinary action;
- be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. They are therefore advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video that they are about to post on a social networking site is something that they want pupils,

colleagues, other employees of the trust, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!

Managers are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media;
- operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.
- implementing and reviewing this policy.

Human resources (HR) is responsible for:

- giving specialist advice on the use of social media.

Definition of social media

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. It allows people to share information, ideas and views. Examples of social media include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Myspace, Flickr and YouTube.

Acceptable use

Employees should be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if you restrict it to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond the intended recipients. Therefore, employees using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

Employees should not upload any content on to social media sites that:

- is confidential to the schools or staff
- amounts to bullying
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- brings the school/trust into disrepute
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips
- undermines the reputation of the school and/or individuals
- is defamatory or knowingly false
- breaches copyright
- is in any other way unlawful.

Employees should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18, or from parents on their personal social media accounts such as Facebook. All communication with parents via social media should be through the schools' social media accounts. Employees should note that the use of social media accounts during lesson time is not permitted.

Safeguarding

The use of social networking sites introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

- online bullying;
- grooming, exploitation or stalking;
- exposure to inappropriate material or hateful language;
- encouraging violent behaviour, self-harm or risk taking.

In order to mitigate these risks, there are steps you can take to promote safety on line:

- You should not use any information in an attempt to locate or meet a child.
- Ensure that any messages, photos or information comply with existing policies.

Reporting safeguarding concerns

- Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as urgent steps may need to be taken to support the child.
- With regard to personal safeguarding, you should report any harassment or abuse you receive online while using your work accounts.

Reporting, responding and recording cyberbullying incidents

- Staff should never engage with cyberbullying incidents. If in the course of your employment with these schools, you discover a website containing inaccurate, inappropriate or inflammatory written material relating to you, or images of you which have been taken and/or which are being used without your permission, you should immediately report this to a senior manager.
- Staff should keep any records of the abuse such as text, emails, voicemail, website or social media. If appropriate, screen prints of messages or web pages could be taken and the time, date and address of site should be recorded.

Action by employer: inappropriate use of social media

- Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, the senior manager will conduct a prompt investigation.
- If in the course of the investigation, it is found that a pupil submitted the material to the website, that pupil will be disciplined in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- The senior manager, where appropriate, will approach the website hosts to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency, ie within 24 hours. If the website requires the individual who is complaining to do so personally, the school will give their full support and assistance.

- Checks will be carried out to ensure that the requested amendments or removals are made. If the website(s) does not co-operate, the senior manager will contact the internet service provider (ISP) as the ISP has the ability to block access to certain sites and, in exceptional circumstances, can close down a website.
- If the material is threatening and/or intimidating, senior management will, with the member of staff's consent, report the matter to the police.
- The member of staff will be offered full support and counselling if appropriate.

Breaches of this policy

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy (or if complaints are received about unacceptable use of social networking that has potentially breached this policy) will be investigated in accordance with the schools' bullying or disciplinary procedure. The member of staff will be expected to co-operate with the schools' investigation which may involve:

- handing over relevant passwords and login details;
- printing a copy or obtaining a screenshot of the alleged unacceptable content;
- determining that the responsibility or source of the content was in fact the member of staff.

The seriousness of the breach will be considered including the nature of the content, how long the content remained visible on the social media site, the potential for recirculation by others and the impact on the school/trust or the individuals concerned. Staff should be aware that actions online can be in breach of the harassment/IT/equality policies and any online breaches of these policies may also be treated as conduct issues in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. If the outcome of an investigation leads to disciplinary action, the consequences will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate procedures. Serious breaches could result in the dismissal of the employee. Where conduct is considered to be unlawful, the school will report the matter to the police and other external agencies.

Use of Social Networking Sites by other members of the community

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest ways to express frustrations or concerns, it is not appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as private and confidential discussion with staff are most appropriate.

The school considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites.

- Making allegations about children at the School/cyber bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific children/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and

complaints against schools, Headteachers, school staff, and in some cases, other families or children. Norton and West Chinnock Schools consider the use of social media websites in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.

Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels to contact the appropriate member of staff, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any child or family member of a child/ren is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any family member or child removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases, the schools will also consider legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a family member to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying.

The schools reserve the right to take any necessary actions to ensure that members of the school community are not subjected to abuse.

Where families or children are found to have breached this policy the Headteacher will meet with families to remind them of the policy. Following this meeting a decision is made as to what further course of action might be taken which may include legal action where there has been damage to the school, individuals or the schools' reputation.

Legislation

Acceptable use of social networking must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the school/trust will adhere to its rights, responsibilities and duties in accordance with the following:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media – the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium. When using social media, staff should be aware of the potential impact on themselves and the employer, whether for work-related or personal use; whether during

working hours or otherwise; or whether social media is accessed using the employer's equipment or using the employee's equipment. Staff should use discretion and common sense when engaging in online communication.