



POLICY DOCUMENT FRONTPAGE

Social Media Policy

CURRENT POLICY

APPROVED BY ALEC HUNTER LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

**THIS POLICY IS REGULARLY REVIEWED
FOLLOWING RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES.**



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

'Social media' (e.g. Facebook, X, Whatsapp, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some video games and video sharing platforms, such as YouTube, also have social media elements to them. These apps and websites have become everyday forms of communication for both adults and children. Whether accessed through a computer or mobile phone, they help us stay in touch with friends and family members, share photos, watch videos, play games and even organise events and campaigns.

At Alec Hunter Academy, we recognise the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal or professional reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe and responsible use of social media by the school, its staff, parents, carers and children.

Scope

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with the following policies:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- ICT Acceptable Use Policies
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- E-Safety Policy

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via personal social media accounts. The school respects privacy and understands that staff and students may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy. Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with pupils/students are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with groups of learners via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must ensure that all communications are appropriate to the purpose of the account and consider the potential implications. Such accounts must never be used for making contact with individual students – school email is the recommended platform for this.

Organisational control

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Senior Leaders:**
 - Facilitate training and guidance on social media use.
 - Developing and implementing the Social Media Policy.
 - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required to investigate and resolve.
 - Receiving completed applications for Social Media accounts.
 - Approving account creation.

- **Social Media Account Administrator/Moderator:**
 - Creating accounts following Leadership Group approval.
 - Storing account details, including passwords securely.
 - Being involved in monitoring and contributing to the account.
 - Controlling the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring).

- **Staff:**
 - Knowing the contents of this and other relevant policies and ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with them.
 - Attending appropriate training.
 - Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content that has been posted via school accounts.
 - Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school.
 - Ensuring that no usage of social media compromises their own professional standing or brings the school into disrepute.

Process for creating new accounts

Members of the school community may consider that a social media account will complement and support their work, e.g. a PE department 'X' account, or a "Friends of Alec Hunter" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Leadership Group (LG) which covers the following points:-

- The aim of the account.
- The intended audience.
- How the account will be promoted.
- Who will oversee the account (at least two staff members should be named as administrators).
- Will the account be open or private/closed.

Following consideration by the LG, an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the LG must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention are essential in case a situation arises where bullying, abuse or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users of social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgements about colleagues, students or parents. School social media

accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.

- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must consult with senior leaders before responding.
- Unacceptable conduct (e.g. defamatory, prejudicial, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality or copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored through the school filtering systems, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and is considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- It is not permitted to add current students as “friends” on a personal social media account, or ex-students until they reach the age of 18. Even at that point, we would recommend that communications are maintained at a professional level, with consideration for how such contact may be perceived by others.
- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the Social Media Policy. Where conduct is considered unacceptable or inappropriate, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is identified as illegal, the school will report the matter to the Police, and other relevant external agencies, and may taken action according to the Disciplinary Policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, such as GDPR, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the school, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.
- If you fee that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. When composing messages, it may be useful to use this checklist to verify that posts are:

- Engaging
- Positive
- Informative
- Supportive
- Kind

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly observed:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school’s GDPR Policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is inappropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images may not be published.

- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

- **Staff**
 - Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used, which associated itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
 - Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
 - Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken. However, the school does permit reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.
 - It is recommended safer recruitment practice for schools to conduct online searches of applicants as part of the shortlisting process. Staff should therefore be mindful of their digital footprint and the impression that this gives regarding their conduct and personal principles.
- **Students**
 - **Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current students of the school on any personal social media network account, and vice versa.**
 - Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with ex-students of the school on any personal social media network account until they reach the age of 18, and vice versa. Even at that point, we would recommend that communications are maintained at a professional level, with consideration for how such contact may be perceived by others.
 - Through the school's curriculum, notably in Computer Science and Learning for Life, but also in assemblies and reflection, students are educated in how to keep themselves safe online, and this includes being safe and responsible users of social media.
 - Students are encouraged to comment or post about the school using only appropriate language and tone. Any offensive, derogatory or inappropriate comments will be addressed through the application of the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy.
- **Parents/Carers**
 - If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
 - Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school, and to approach the school directly if they wish to raise a concern, rather than resorting to social media to do so. In the event of any offensive, derogatory or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, parents will be referred to the school's Complaints Policy.

Monitoring posts about the school

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school.
- The school should respond effectively, professionally and positively to social media comments made by others, but reserves the right to take appropriate action if necessary.

Appendix

Advice to staff on managing your personal use of Social Media:

- Always be mindful that nothing on social media is truly private.
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Do not use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy.
- Manage your digital footprint and consider the impact that this could have on your career prospects and professional reputation.
- Keep your personal information private.
- Regularly review your connections – restrict them to people to whom you actively wish to be connected.
- When posting online consider the scale, audience and permanency of what you post.
- If you are posting anything which may be perceived as critical, be polite and respectful.
- Take control of your images – Do you want to be tagged in an image? What would students or parents say about you if they could see you in these images.
- Know how to report a problem or anything offensive.

Managing school social media accounts

The Do's

- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts.
- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have implications for the school.
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views.
- Make it clear who is posting content.
- Use an appropriate and professional tone.
- Be respectful to all parties.
- Ensure you have permissions to “share” other peoples’ materials and acknowledge the author.
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner.
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion.
- Seek advice and report any mistakes or concerns to your Line Manager
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible.

The Don'ts

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute.
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material.
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation.
- Don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content.
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, prejudicial or discriminatory content.
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances or comment on colleagues.