



# Hopelands Preparatory School

38/40 Regent Street, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2AD

## Social Media Policy

***Hopelands Preparatory School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.***

### Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the school including the EYFS.

### Objectives

This policy sets out Hopelands Preparatory School's policy on social networking. Social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging, involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image. In addition, Hopelands Preparatory School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

### Key Principles

Everyone at Hopelands Preparatory School has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school with professionalism and respect.

It is important to protect everyone at Hopelands from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.

Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone at Hopelands considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school.

**Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.**

This policy relates to social networking outside work. Blogging and accessing social networking sites at work or at home using school equipment is not permitted, unless for professional purposes and authorised by the Headteacher.

### Aims

- To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, governors, friends and volunteers at Hopelands Preparatory School with respect to social networking.
- To further safeguard and protect children and staff.

## Overview and Expectations

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, children, public in general and all those with whom they work. Adults in contact with children should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The guidance contained in this policy is an attempt to identify what behaviours are expected of the schools' staff who work with children. Anyone whose practice deviates from this document and/or their professional or employment-related code of conduct may bring into question their suitability to work with children and young people and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

School staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

## Code of Conduct: Social Networking

**Under no circumstances should staff make reference to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event.**

The following are also **not considered acceptable** at Hopelands Preparatory School:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Headteacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.

**In addition to the above everyone at Hopelands Preparatory School must ensure that they:**

- Communicate with children and parents in an open and transparent way using the school phone number and email address.
- Never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site.
- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Staff **must not** post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff **must not** post information or opinions about Hopelands Preparatory School or pictures of school events
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security. Guidelines are issued to staff:

- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.

The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise the Headteacher of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. This policy takes account of employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to social networking in addition to the legal obligations of governing bodies and the relevant legislation.

### **Comments posted by parents/carers**

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking. Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, our blog, letters and verbal discussion. School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for the child.

- Parents must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event. This includes the School's own Facebook Page.
- Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

### **Safer Online Behaviour**

Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc. **If you are an employee of a school and particularly if you are a teacher, you should not put any information onto the site that could identify either your profession or the school where you work. In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the school or the profession.**

In their own interests, staff need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for children or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. It also

reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties. All staff, particularly new staff, should review their social networking sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the school if they are published outside of the site.

Employees need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of work, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other employees, children or other individuals connected with the school, or another school, could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might put the school into disrepute.

### **Mobile Phones/Camera/Video Recorder Usage**

**To ensure the safety and welfare of children in our care personal mobile phones, cameras and video recorders must not be used when children are present.**

- All mobile phones must be kept in a secure place (not in a pocket), switched off and not be accessed throughout contact time with the children.
- In exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed and agreed with a member of the leadership team, staff may keep their phone switched on and accessible as long as they use their phone out of view of children, i.e. in a room designated for staff, e.g. the staff room or an office.
- During school visits mobile phones should be used away from the children and for emergency purposes only.
- Photographs or images of any children within our care may only be taken following parental consent and only using one of the school cameras / IT equipment. These images should remain within this setting or be shared only with the parents of the child concerned.
- Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorders cannot be used to record classroom activities. ONLY school property can be used for this.
- School photographs and recordings can only be transferred to, and stored on a school computer. Children are not allowed to have mobile phones in school. If children bring a phone to school they should take it to the school office where it will be kept until the end of the school day.
- Children have their photographs taken to provide evidence of their achievements for their development records (The Early Years Foundation Stage, EYFS 2007).

**Staff, visitors, volunteers and students are not permitted to use their own mobile phones to take or record any images of school children for their own records during the school day**

### **Procedures**

- Under the data protection act of 1998 school must seek parental consent to take photographs and use video recorders. Photographs will be stored on the school network which is password protected until the school ceases to operate, should this occur then all photographs will be shredded or deleted from the school network.
- The school's digital cameras must not leave the school setting (unless on an educational visit).
- Photographs are printed in the setting by staff and images are then removed from the camera memory.
- Photographs of children may be taken and used in accordance with parental consent obtained via the Permission Forms.

- Often photographs may contain other children in the background.
- Events such as Sports Day, outings, Christmas and fundraising events may be recorded by video and photographs by staff and parent/carers but always in full view of all attending.
- Parents must not post photographs or video containing other children on social media websites. Many mobile phones have inbuilt cameras so staff mobile phones must not be used to take pictures of children in our school.
- **Visitors may only use their phones in the staff room or school office and should be challenged if seen using a camera inappropriately or photographing children.**
- The use of cameras and mobile phones are prohibited in toilets.
- Staff are asked not to make personal calls during their working hours. However in urgent cases a call may be made or accepted if deemed necessary and by arrangement with the Headteacher.
- All school cameras and videos should be kept securely at all times and used with appropriate authority.

### **Protection of Personal Information**

Staff should not give their personal e-mail addresses to children or parents. Where there is a need for communication to be sent electronically the school e-mail address should be used. Likewise staff should keep their personal phone numbers private and not use their own mobile phones to contact children or parents in a professional capacity. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between children and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle or staff are transport escorts. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Staff have a responsibility to make any such contact known to the senior leadership team.

Staff should never share their work log-ins or passwords with other people. Staff are advised to understand who is allowed to view the content on their pages of the sites they use and how to restrict access to certain groups of people.

### **Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage**

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Staff who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children are illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children, if proven.

Staff should not use equipment belonging to their school/service to access any pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children.

Where indecent images of children are found by staff, the police should be immediately informed. The school will not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material itself, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution.

Where other unsuitable material is found, which may not be illegal but which raises concerns about that member of staff, the governors will be informed an advice sought. The school will not attempt to investigate or evaluate the material themselves until such advice is received.

### **Cyberbullying**

Hopelands' definition of cyberbullying is **'the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them.'**

In order to reduce the potential for cyberbullying children are not allowed to bring phones into the school. Prevention activities are key to ensuring that staff are protected from the potential threat of cyberbullying. All employees are reminded of the need to protect themselves from the potential threat of cyberbullying. Following the advice contained in this guidance should reduce the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands.

If cyberbullying does take place, employees should keep records of the abuse, text, e-mails, website or instant message and should not delete texts or e-mails. Employees are advised to take screen prints of messages or web pages and be careful to record the time, date and place of the site.

Staff are encouraged to report all incidents of cyberbullying to the Headteacher. All such incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in consideration of the wishes of the person who has reported the incident. It is for the individual who is being bullied to decide whether they wish to report the actions to the police.

### **Social Media and Radicalisation**

The school pays due regard to the Prevent Duty 2015 and takes its responsibility to safeguard children from radicalisation. Information from the Home Office and DfE on how social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/440450/How\\_social\\_media\\_is\\_used\\_to\\_encourage\\_travel\\_to\\_Syria\\_and\\_Iraq.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/440450/How_social_media_is_used_to_encourage_travel_to_Syria_and_Iraq.pdf)

Extremists use the internet, including social media, to share their messages. The filtering systems used in our school blocks inappropriate content, including extremist content.

We also filter out social media, such as Facebook. Searches and web addresses are monitored and the teaching staff will alert senior staff where there are concerns and prevent further access when new sites that are unblocked are found.

Where staff, students or visitors find unblocked extremist content they must report it to a senior member of staff.

### **Link with Other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Preventing Radicalisation Policy
- Child Protection and Staff Behaviour Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Caring and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Induction of New Staff, Governors and Volunteers in Child Protection Policy
- Interaction with Pupils – Model Code for Staff
- Taking Storing and Using Images of Children Policy

All employees must adhere to and apply the principles of the policy in all aspects of their work. Failure to do so may lead to action being taken under the disciplinary procedure.

### **Review of Policy**

Due to the ever changing nature of information and communication technologies it is best practice that this policy be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1

Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Site

Dear Mr/Mrs.....

It has come to the attention of the Governing Body that inappropriate comments regarding the school/members of the school community have been made on a social networking site.

As these comments do not comply with the expectations set out in the school's Social Media Policy you are respectfully asked to remove them from the website.

We would encourage you to enter into productive communication with the school in order to resolve any outstanding differences. The school has an 'open door' policy with regard to dealing with parental communication and there are also policies in place such as the Complaints Policy if required.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governing Body

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

Hopelands Preparatory School

Held on

October 2016

Date to be reviewed

October 2017

Signed on behalf of the senior management team



Name of signatory

Sheila Bradburn

Role of signatory

Head

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Name of signatory

Richard James

Role of signatory

Chair of Governors