Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy

Written by:	Zoe Fletcher	**Date:** September 2024
Last reviewed on:	2nd November 2026	
Next review due by:	November 2027	

The purpose of this policy is to assist employees by providing clear guidance about acceptable behaviour on social media both at work and out of work.

Borrow Wood Primary School recognises that the Internet provides a unique opportunity to participate in interactive discussions and share information using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, X, Linked-In, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and blogs. Employees are likely to use social media in a private capacity outside of work and they may also be required to use it in a professional capacity as part of their role at Borrow Wood Primary School.

However, employees' use of social media in both a personal and professional capacity can present risks to our confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, and to ensure that our ICT resources and communications systems are used appropriately, we expect employees to adhere to this policy.

This policy applies to all employees, governors, volunteers and visitors at Borrow Wood Primary School. The policy also applies to all student/work experience placements.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes, whether during school hours or otherwise. It also applies whether the social media is accessed using school ICT equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Mobile Phone Policy.

Introduction

Social media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other, or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as X, Tik Tok, Facebook, Snapchat, Linked-In, internet newsgroups, and chat rooms. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as Instagram, YouTube and Flickr. There are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. This policy refers to the examples listed, **and** any new social media, which is developed in the future.

Employees need to be aware that the information they post on their personal social media profile can make them identifiable to parents and children at Borrow Wood Primary School, as well as people they know in a private capacity.

Employees should therefore consider this when setting up an online profile particularly in relation to the use of a photograph, providing details of their occupation, employer, and work location.

We advise that employees are not linked to parents/carers of children at Borrow Wood on social media. If employees choose to have parents/carers as friends on social media, they are expected to inform the head teacher of their names.

Online sites such as Facebook, X, Tik Tok, Instagram are in the public domain, and personal profile details can be seen by anyone, even if users have their privacy settings on the highest level. Also if a

user's profile is linked to other sites, any changes to their profile will be updated there too. Employees who have set their privacy level to the maximum can have their privacy compromised by 'friends' who may not have set their security to the same standard.

All employees are expected to behave appropriately and responsibly, and should be aware that they may be accountable to Borrow Wood Primary School for actions outside of their work.

An employee's personal social media account should not, directly or by implication, give the impression that they are endorsed by, or speaking on behalf of Borrow Wood Primary School. Online conduct is the employee's responsibility, and it is important that employees are aware that posting information on social networking sites in a personal capacity cannot be entirely isolated from their working life.

Any information published online can be accessed around the world and will be publicly available for all to see, and this may be impossible to delete/withdraw once published. Borrow Wood Primary School views any comment that is made on a social media site to have been made publicly, and that any inappropriate comment made, will be considered in the context of which it is made.

For example, disparaging comments against a colleague made on Facebook could be viewed as bullying/harassment, and could be considered to bring Borrow Wood Primary School into disrepute.

Employees should be aware that all comments made through social media must meet the standards of the relevant legislation and regulations, including Data Protection legislation (GDPR), Privacy Notices, the Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct and the Equality and Diversity policy.

Employees may be accountable for actions outside of work, including making comments on social media sites, if that is contrary to any of Borrow Wood Primary School's policies and procedures, impacts on or compromises the employee's ability to undertake their role, or undermines management decisions. Such behaviour could be investigated and may result in disciplinary action being taken, and ultimately could result in dismissal.

Access to social media for work purposes

Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the Borrow Wood Primary School's Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy. Employees must be aware that they are representing the school when they are contributing to the school's social media activities. Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public domain.

Employees are not allowed to access social media websites for personal use from the school's computers or devices during working time and they must not be left running 'in the background', whilst at work. These provisions also apply to personal computers and mobile devices.

Leaving Social Media sites 'running' constantly in work time is considered to be a breach of the Acceptable Use of ICT policy.

Any communications that employees make through social media must not:

1. **Bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:**

- Criticising, disagreeing or arguing with parents, colleagues or managers;
- Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations/groups;
- Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
- Agreeing with or condoning inappropriate comments or content;

2. **Breach confidentiality, for example by:**

- Referring to confidential information about an individual or the school.

3. **Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual or group of individuals, and in contravention of the school's procedures, for example by:**

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
- Using social media to bully another individual;
- Posting images that are discriminatory, bullying or offensive or links to such content;
- Agreeing with or condoning inappropriate comments or content that are discriminatory, bullying or offensive.

4. **Any other action that impacts on the employee's ability to do their job, for example by:**

- Online activity that is incompatible with the position they hold in the school.
- Any breach occurring inside or outside the workplace that is likely to affect the employee doing his/her work.

5. **Contravene the School's policies, for example**

- The Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy
- The Acceptable Use Agreement
- The Equality and Diversity policy
- The Mobile Phone Policy
- The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct

The above examples are not an exhaustive list of the misuses of social media, but are examples to illustrate what misuse may look like. Employees are encouraged to talk to their line manager and seek advice if they are unclear.

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Comments made through social media may constitute an act of misconduct or gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal, if the comments contravene any of the School's policies. School should ensure that all complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and in a timely manner.

Employees have a responsibility to:

- Avoid behaviour that may cause an individual to feel the subject of harassment or bullying.
- Familiarise themselves with this policy and employee guidelines on the acceptable use of social media and act responsibly when using online media for work and personal use.
- Report instances to their manager, if they are subject to abuse

Senior Leaders have a responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy.
- Take prompt action to stop any harassment or bullying they become aware of, whether a complaint has been raised or not
- Ensure staff are aware of this policy.
- Support employees who are the subject of abuse through existing practices
- Ensure all complaints/allegations are dealt with fairly and consistently, and in accordance with other employment policies where appropriate.

This policy also works alongside other policies and procedures including;

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Data will be processed to be in line with the requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

APPENDIX A

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE ON THE ACCEPTABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees must be mindful that any online activities/comments made in a public domain, must be compatible with their position within Borrow Wood Primary School, and safeguard themselves in a professional capacity.

Protect their own privacy to ensure that their social network account does not compromise their professional position, ensure that their privacy settings are set correctly.

Comments made outside work, within the arena of social media, do not remain private and so can have an effect on or have work-related implications. Therefore, comments made through social media, which may be intended to be "private" may still be in contravention of the Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use Policy or the Disciplinary procedure. Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed making it easy to lose control of. Presume everything you post online will be permanent and can be shared.

Do not discuss work-related issues online, including conversations about school, complaints, management or disparaging remarks about colleagues, children or parents. Even when anonymised, these are likely to be inappropriate. In addition doing this in the presence of others may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment.

Do not under any circumstances accept friend requests from a person you believe could conflict with your employment.

Be aware that other users may access your profile and if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, make a complaint about you to the school as your employer.

Ensure that any comments and/or images cannot be deemed defamatory, libelous or in breach of copyright legislation.

When setting up your profile online consider whether it is appropriate and prudent for you to include a photograph, or provide occupation, employer or work location details.

You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites. Most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others.

If you do find inappropriate references and/or images of you posted by a 'friend' online you should contact them and the site to have the material removed.

If you are very concerned about someone else's behaviour online, you should take steps to raise your concerns. If these are work related you should inform your line manager.

Employees should also act in accordance with the Staff, Volunteers and Visitors Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use Acceptable Use Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Employees should not access social media sites or leave these running in the background during working time, *for personal use*, on any devices within their control.

Appendix B

ICT ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY – Staff, Governors, Students, Visitors and Volunteers

All organisations (including schools) where digital technologies are in use are required to have a Code of

Practice/Acceptable Use Policy, which promotes the acceptable use of technology.

Legislation references:

- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Computer Misuse Act (1990)
- Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1998)
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (amended 2002)
- Government guidelines and initiatives eg the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Body (CEOP).

ICT and the related technologies such as email, the internet and mobile devices are an expected part of our daily working life in school. This agreement is designed to ensure that all staff, governors, volunteers, visitors and students are aware of their professional responsibilities when using any form of ICT. All staff, governors, students, visitors and volunteers are expected to sign this agreement and adhere at all times to its contents. Any concerns or clarification should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Natalie Bartlett.

- I will only use the school's email, Internet and any related technologies for professional purposes.
- I will comply with the ICT system security and not disclose any passwords or codes provided to me by the school or other related authorities.
- I will ensure that all electronic communications with pupils and staff are compatible with my professional role.
- I will log off the school network when leaving a workstation unattended.
- I will not share my personal details, e.g. mobile phone number/personal email address, with pupils or parents.
- I will ensure that I am not in contact with any current Borrow Wood Primary School pupils or former pupils until they are 18 years old on Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and X.
- If I am in contact with parents of children at Borrow Wood, I will ensure that I do not post information or images that undermine my professional position.
- I will inform the head teacher of the names of any parents I am linked to on Social Media.
- I will only use the approved, secure school email system (.....@borrowwood.odysseyct.org.uk) for school business.
- I will ensure that any pupil or personal data is kept secure and is used appropriately, whether in school, taken off the school premises or accessed remotely.
- I will request the technician to only install apps or software on school devices for educational purposes.
- I will not browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, bullying, abusive, illegal or discriminatory or hack or impersonate other users in line with the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- I will not use a personal device to take images of children at school or on school related activities. Images of pupils will only be taken on school devices.

- I will only store images of pupils on the school network or school devices that are password protected.
- I understand that parental/carer consent is required to publish any images on the school website or distributed outside of school.
- I will take responsibility for the safe, responsible and legal use of technologies.
- I will actively participate in Online Safety Education including knowledge of the risks and opportunities linked with technology.
- I understand that my use of the Internet and other related technologies can be monitored by the Head teacher.
- I will respect copyright and intellectual property rights.
- I will be vigilant and report any incidents of concern regarding children's safety and apparent failures of safeguards to the Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- I will not disclose or share information on social media that undermines the reputation of Borrow Wood School or brings the school into disrepute.
- I will uphold public trust by maintaining high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school.
- I will support and promote the school's Online Safety policy and help pupils to be safe and responsible for their use of ICT and related technologies.
- I agree to follow this code of conduct and to support the safe use of ICT inside and outside of school.

Full Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date:.....

Role: .....

Appendix C

WhatApp Guidelines

We appreciate that as a busy school, we need to share various pieces of information and news within the team.

With this in mind we have decided to do this via a dedicated Borrow Wood Staff WhatsApp group.

All members of Borrow Wood staff are welcome to join the group and we encourage you to join to receive the latest updates and ease the ability to arrange cover, update absences and remind of timely notices. Natalie will be responsible for the group or group admin and they will send a link out for you to join if you wish.

Within your own Whatsapp settings, you can 'hide' your number from community groups but please be aware that if you haven't got this setting on, your number will be visible and available to the rest of the group.

You can opt to leave the group at any time and if you leave Borrow Wood your number will be automatically removed from the group.

WhatsApp Etiquette

Here are some tips to ensure everyone gets the most out of the Borrow Wood WhatsApp group:

- Remember to be considerate and respectful to others.
- Please be polite and observe the same level of courtesy as you would do if you were speaking to someone face to face at the office.
- Please refrain from commenting or sharing content (including videos or pictures) that could be interpreted as inappropriate, demeaning or inflammatory.
- Please only discuss work related or business matters in the group chat and use alternative groups or chats for personal discussions.
- Please do not share or discuss children's information (initials can be used for example can you cover AB at lunch today).
- Please do not share confidential information about the business or individuals in the group.
- Please continue to use the current sickness absence process if you are sick and unable to attend work.
- Understand that the discussions will be moderated by the group admin and any inappropriate activity may lead to further investigation and potential action under the disciplinary procedure.
- Please be aware of the time that the Whatsapp group is used. The hours of use will be from 7am-7pm, and there is no obligation to read or send messages beyond these times.
- In school, phone use is discouraged so no messages will be sent during teaching time. The usual communication systems will be used during the school day (face to face, email, class phones).

By joining the group, you are agreeing to the etiquette above and will conduct yourself in a professional manner when using the Borrow Wood Whatsapp group.

If you have any queries or concerns about the group or its content please discuss this with Natalie, n.bartlett@borrowwood.odysseyct.org.uk