Social Media Policy

Barlow Church of England Primary School

Last Reviewed	**April 2026**
Reviewed By (Name)	**Penny Watkin**
Job Role	**Headteacher**
Next Review Date	**April 2027**
Version produced Spring 2026	Amendments indicated in green text. **The following has been implemented throughout:** When we use the word **must**, this refers to legal requirements. When we use the word **should**, this does not refer to a legal requirement, but what we consider is important to help you to comply effectively with the law. You should do this unless there is a good reason not to. If you choose to take a different approach, you need to be able to demonstrate that your approach complies with the law. When we use the word **could**, this refers to an option or options that you could consider to help you comply effectively. There are

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	likely to be various other ways you could comply. Removed KCSiE year reference to ensure it refers to latest version. KCSiE links and references updated **3. Recognised school/trust/academy Channels-** added a paragraph re Grok - the AI tool linked to X/Twitter **10. Relevant Legislation-** added The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

This document will be reviewed annually by the Data Protection Officer, and sooner where significant changes to the law occur. The school should also review this document annually, and earlier if legal changes are made to the law.

Guidance from the Department for Education about school policies can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trusts/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trustsContents

Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. Scope and Responsibilities 3

3. Recognised school Channels 4

4. Our Social Media Standards 5

5. Our Social Media Rules 5

6. Access to Social Media at Work, for Personal Use 7

7. Online Safety Concerns 7

8. Inappropriate References to the school or Staff 7

9. Complaints 7

10. Relevant Legislation 7

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1. Introduction

- We recognise the benefits of social media, but it also brings potential risk, to the school and to individuals. For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as websites and applications (apps) that allow people to create or share content and/or participate in social networking. Examples include, amongst others Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, WordPress, Tumblr, Ask.fm, WhatsApp, Messenger. This policy also refers to online gaming platforms and MMORPG ('massively multiplayer online role-playing games') e.g. World of Warcraft.
- We realise that a growing number of educationalists and education groups use discussion groups, online chat forums and bulletin boards to share good practice and disseminate information and resources. The use of online discussion groups and bulletin boards relating to professional practice and continuing professional development is encouraged, although staff are reminded that they are representing the school, and appropriate professional standards should apply to all postings and messages.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the school HR advice and guidance. This policy has been the subject of formal negotiation and consultation between Derbyshire County Council and the recognised Trade Unions and Professional Associations. Agreement and adoption were only reached by Schools Joint consultative Committee where it is used in conjunction with the DCC LA Acceptable Use of IT Advice and Guidance.

2. Scope and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all use of social media, by all staff, governors and volunteers, including personal use, work-related use, during working hours or out of hours, onsite or offsite, through the school's internet network or otherwise, on school owned or personal devices, on official school social media accounts/platforms or personal accounts/platforms. This should be read in conjunction with the Bring Your Own Device Policy and the IT Acceptable Use Policy.

All staff are expected to comply with this policy. All leaders are responsible for ensuring their team read, understand, and comply with this procedure.

In order to be described as an official 'school platform' or 'school account':

- Master privileges and access permissions are held by the school
- The school should have editorial oversight of all content
- The number of staff members with administrative rights should be limited to those necessary

'Quasi school' social media, for example a Twitter account such as 'Miss Stuart History @ Secondary School' are not official school platforms unless the above conditions are met. The school will not accept liability for content and postings on accounts containing the school name which have not been authorised and do not meet the official 'school platform' criteria. Accounts used will be listed in the Privacy Notice, and personal information and pictures must not be posted without appropriate consent and oversight. Authorised accounts will remain the property of the school and may be deleted at any time by the school.

Our Data Protection Officer – DPO will provide assistance and further guidance on the use of social media with regards to data protection.

A breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action.

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If there are concerns that comments or posts may potentially be defamatory or libellous, the school may seek legal advice.

3. Recognised school Channels

If your setting has an official social media presence you should include the following section, amended as appropriate to your setting.

[delete once read] Grok - the AI tool linked to X/Twitter has made headlines recently due to the system's limited restrictions in relation to image editing and manipulation. Despite recent political intervention and updates made by X/Twitter, we remain unable to sign off DPIAs on school's use of X/Twitter.

<School/Trust/Academy name> official social media channels are:

List details e.g. Twitter link; YouTube channel link – delete the examples once complete.

Platform	Account/Page name	Master administration role	Approved users (posting)	Date	
				Opened	Closed
Eg Twitter	History@SSchool	Business Manager	HoD (Humanities)	16/5/18	
Eg Facebook	Marehay Primary	Headteacher	DHT, SBO	16/1/23	

We use these social media accounts to celebrate successes and events in the school

[A] We seek consent, upon admission, from parents / carers (pupils where age appropriate) to include personal data in the form of pictures, names, quotes, displays etc .

[B] However, we do not include personal data of any type in these posts.

The official use of social media sites is limited to activities with educational or community engagement objectives.

Account information and login details will be held centrally in the school.

Multi-factor authentication (a method of account security that ensures only legitimate users can access accounts and applications), should be enabled wherever possible.

Official social media sites have appropriate privacy settings, are suitably protected and, where possible, linked to from our website.

Official social media use should be conducted in line with existing policies, including anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality, and child protection.

Any official social media activity involving pupils should be moderated. (***if appropriate***)

Official social media use should be used in conjunction with other methods of communication, so as to reach all members of the community, including those who do not / cannot utilise social media.

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4. Our Social Media Standards

We will ensure online conduct, whether on behalf of the school or posted on a personal account by a staff member, does not impact adversely on the reputation and integrity of the setting.

As part of our obligations under KCSiE we may check (and record the outcomes of these checks) the online presence including social media searches of our staff, Governors and volunteers.

Any use of social media that could impact on the school should meet these standards:

- Respect others, they may be affected directly or indirectly by your actions online
- Be honest about who you are, and what you know
- Be sensitive to others and to your position within the school
- Protect privacy and respect your confidentiality of that of others
- Maintain professional standards.
- If in doubt, don't post!

5. Our Social Media Rules

These rules should be followed, to ensure we meet the required standards:

i. Be kind:

- Use common courtesy.
- Consider the potential effect on others of your words or content you post
- Always be responsible, credible, fair, and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.

ii. Be honest:

- Be transparent about your role, especially when representing the school in an official capacity
- Only post about things you know to be true and only if it is appropriate to share them
- Do not post someone else's images or content without prior permission, or with appropriate acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce

iii. Be sensitive:

- Do not enter into discussions with parents or colleagues via social media forums
- Do not post or share images, memes (or similar) or links that are inappropriate or have inappropriate content
- Do not post anything that could be considered; discriminatory, gossip, lies, offensive or threatening comments, comments/images that deliberately, negligently, or recklessly mock, tease, humiliate or harass an individual
- Be especially careful when posting about potentially inflammatory subjects.
- Do not give advice or information that you know to be contrary to the school's policies or interests.

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- Do not reveal any sensitive information about the school or about any plans that are not yet public.
- In the event of an incident affecting the school or any members of the school community only official communications channels and accounts should comment or share news or updates.
- Be aware of the potential risks of communicating with current and ex-pupils in ways which may be considered as inappropriate, particularly if it could be shown that the adult-pupil relationship of trust had been breached.
- Only use official school platforms to post school information, celebration, news, and photographs. Ensure all posts are in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any inappropriate contact from pupils to the headteacher at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations from escalating.
- Staff are reminded that, as a safeguarding issue, they should always be careful about who they are 'talking to'. It is very easy to hide an identity in an on-line conversation.

iv. Protect privacy and respect confidentiality:

- Do not breach confidentiality – do not share anything private about anyone else
- Don't share anything about yourself that you wouldn't want the rest of the school community to see.
- Be aware that what you post could divulge information such as your home address.
- Always follow the Data Protection Policy and ensure that you have secured the appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel
- Apply appropriate security and privacy settings to your social media accounts and the devices you use to access them.
- Make yourself familiar with privacy settings – these change often and with little or no warning; users with access to the school account should ensure that privacy settings are routinely updated
- Be aware of 'phishing' attempts through social media, where scammers may try to obtain information about you or other people, including passwords or financial information.

v. Maintain professional standards

- Do not 'befriend' or initiate engagement online with pupils, or families of pupils, (including former pupils who have recently left the school) unless you are the parent of the pupil or a close family member.
- If you do wish to communicate with or are contacted by a former pupil who has recently left the school, via social media, contact the head teacher before engaging.
- Always be professional and aware that you are an ambassador for the school. Remember you are representing the school and the same standards of conduct should be followed online as well as offline.
- Do not post or share offensive, discriminatory, or illegal content, or anything that would bring the school into disrepute.
- Ensure a clear distinction between school, and personal life when making comments and posts.

vi. If in doubt, don't post!

- Once you've posted something to the internet it cannot be taken back.
- Even if you delete content it may already have been copied or saved by another user and could be shared more widely.

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- Even if you have posted in a closed or private group other members may not respect the rules or your confidentiality.

6. Access to Social Media at Work, for Personal Use

Personal use of the Internet including access to social media is only permitted in your own time (e.g. before or after work and during your lunchtime) and should not be left running "in the background", whilst at work. Staff are advised to refer the school's Bring Your Own Device and IT Acceptable Use policies for further guidance.

7. Online Safety Concerns

All staff members will be made aware of the reporting procedure for online safety concerns, including breaches of filtering, youth produced sexual imagery ('sexting', 'nudes'), cyberbullying, illegal content, and radicalisation. Refer to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' – in particular, but not exclusively paragraphs 134-151 Online Safety.

8. Inappropriate References to the school or Staff

Members of staff who find that 'friends' have posted inappropriate material, relating to themselves on a social media site should ask them to remove it. If necessary, users could also report comments and posts to the site. Staff should advise the Headteacher if there are likely repercussions for the setting.

Where staff are the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites, site reporting functions should be used. Where possible screen captures ('screen grabs') or photos of any post, page, or thread which may be considered harmful, threatening or abusive should be taken.

Where staff find inappropriate references to the school, staff or pupils posted by parents, colleagues, pupils, or other members of the community, this should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible. The Headteacher will take the appropriate course of action, which may include contacting the Human Resources team, seeking legal advice or contacting Law enforcement agencies e.g. police. Staff should not attempt to deal with the situation personally.

9. Complaints

There may be times where individuals will bypass the school's complaints procedures and use social media to criticise school decisions or policy, and, in some cases, make malicious comments about staff or governors.

Whilst people have a right to freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act 1998, their opinions should not cause harm or distress. Any complaint, dispute or grievance posted on any social media channels which names staff members, pupils, governors, or volunteers should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Concerns and complaints relating to colleague or pupil social media activity should be directed to the headteacher or Chair of Governors as appropriate.

10. Relevant Legislation

In applying this policy, the school will adhere to its rights, responsibilities, and duties in accordance with UK law. The following legislation may be pertinent:

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- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 etc).
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Malicious Communications Act 1988: Section 1
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Communications Act 2003: Section 127
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013
- Online Safety Act 2023.
- The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

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