

# Social Media Policy

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.
- 1.2 While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Cringleford CE VA Primary School staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.
- 1.3 It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school are safeguarded.
- 1.4 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to Cringleford CE VA Primary School governing body, all staff, external contractors providing services on behalf of the, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.
- 2.2 This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school.
- 2.3 This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*), blogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. 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.

## 3 Legal Framework

- 3.1 Cringleford CE VA Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- the Data Protection Act 1998
- Teachers' standards (section 2)

3.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School or County Council business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

3.3 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

3.4 Cringleford CE VA Primary School could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc., or who defame a third party while at work may render Cringleford CE VA Primary School liable to the injured party.

## **4 Related Policies**

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

- Cringleford CE VA Primary School's Code of Conduct for Employees

## **5 Principles – be professional, responsible and respectful**

5.1 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school and your personal interests.

- 5.2 You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Cringleford CE VA Primary School into disrepute.
- 5.3 You must not represent your personal views as those of Cringleford CE VA Primary School on any social medium.
- 5.4 You must not discuss personal information about pupils, Cringleford CE VA Primary School staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.
- 5.5 You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, or any other linked with Cringleford CE VA Primary School.

## **6 Personal use of Social Media**

- 6.1 Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil from Cringleford CE VA Primary School unless the pupils are family members.
- 6.2.1 Cringleford CE VA Primary School does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- 6.3 Staff members should not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- 6.3.1 If staff members wish to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another via email, for example, they can only do so through official school sites, such as the VLE.
- 6.4 Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts.
- 6.5 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members and colleagues or any general school information must not be discussed on their personal webpage.
- 6.9 Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils must not be published on personal webpage.
- 6.10 School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- 6.11 Personal use of social media while at work is not allowed. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties.
- 6.12 Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.

- 6.13 Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.
- 6.14 Staff are referred to Childnet website for up-to-date guidelines on using social media. <http://www.childnet.com/downloads/Teachers-and-technology.pdf>

## **7 Using Social Media on behalf of Cringleford CE VA Primary School**

- 7.1 Staff members can only use the VLE for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

## **8 Monitoring of Internet Use**

- 8.1 Cringleford CE VA Primary School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.
- 8.2 Users of Cringleford CE VA Primary School email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

## **9 Breaches of the Policy**

- 9.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Cringleford CE VA Primary School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 9.2 A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Cringleford CE VA Primary School or any illegal acts or acts that render Cringleford CE VA Primary School liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- 9.4.1 Contracted providers of Cringleford CE VA Primary School must inform the school immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school and the. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.