Overley Hall School

Social Media Policy

Approved by:	SAS Team, Headteacher
Date reviewed	**28th April 2026**
Next review date	**27th April 2027**

1. Aims and Objectives:

The School recognises and accepts that its staff and parents/carers may keep personal blogs on the internet and that social networking sites are a useful way of interacting socially with colleagues, family and friends.

While the School does not wish to discourage employees or families from accessing these sites, it expects certain standards of conduct to be observed to protect both its legitimate business interests and employees from the dangers of inappropriate use.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, X, Tik-Tok and Instagram are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff.

This policy sets out the School's approach to the use of such sites to express negative/ abuse views/opinions in relation to the school and its community. The policy sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that members of the school community have placed information on such websites/apps inappropriately.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used only in a beneficial and positive way
- Safeguard learners, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites;
- Safeguard the reputation of the School from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites;

- Clarify what the School considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking;
- Set out the procedures the School will follow where it considers members of the school community have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the School, its staff or its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School;

While you may have your own membership on such sites set to friends and family, you are reminded that they can forward the content of your blogs onto others and because you have no control over this process, you are reminded that none of your postings are truly private.

PROCEDURE

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by employees

This policy applies both inside and outside the workplace.

As a guide, individuals should consider the following before posting any negative information on social networking sites about the School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the School be more appropriate?

Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.

- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the School has not

yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?

- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the School; any detrimental harm that the School may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Staff must not access blogs or social networking sites during working hours. Access using the School's IT systems is restricted to official breaks, unless specific permission is granted.

Staff must not post information on a blog or social networking site which is commercially sensitive and/or is confidential to the School, or the school community.

Staff must not make reference on a social networking site to the School, its employees, its learners, parents or suppliers. Any of the aforementioned parties must not be identifiable from any comments posted on an employee's personal blog.

Staff must not post entries on a blog or social networking site which are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive employees in any way, or which could bring the School, its , its pupils, parents or suppliers into disrepute or is likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of any of these parties.

Where staff are a member of social networking sites, they are advised that they must not invite customers to be a friend on such a site or post comments on or interact in any way with their blog. In the case of Overley Hall School this includes: Parents or other family members of a child or adult in our care, foster carers, social workers, trainers or other visiting professionals associated within the school or home.

Staff should be aware that blogs and social networking posts may create documents which the courts can order to be disclosed for use in litigation. Consequently, you will be assumed to have written any contentious items unless you can prove definitively that you have not done so.

The School will monitor its IT systems as is deemed necessary in order to prevent inappropriate usage. Hard copies of blog entries which could include screen shots will be used in any disciplinary proceedings.

Disciplinary actions for staff

Employees whose conduct breaches this policy in any way may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's disciplinary procedure up to, and including, dismissal.

Any blog entries or comments on social networking sites made inside or outside the workplace that are defamatory, derogatory, or discriminatory about the School, its pupils, parents/carers, suppliers or employees will be investigated as gross misconduct. If substantiated, such conduct may lead to summary dismissal after the due process of the School's disciplinary procedure has been followed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunity Statement, Positive Work Environment Policy and Mobile Telephones – Personal Mobiles Policy, Staff Code of Conduct.

Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, a member of the Senior Leadership team (or other senior person if the report is about one of these) will conduct a prompt investigation.

The senior manager, where appropriate, will approach the website hosts to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency i.e. within 24 hours. If the website requires the individual who has posted the information to do so personally the school will give their full support and assistance.

A check will be carried out to ensure that the requested amendments have been made. If the individual or website does not co-operate, the senior manager will contact the internet service provider (ISP) as the ISP has the ability to block access to a certain site and, in exceptional circumstances, can close down a website.

If the material is threatening and/or intimidating, senior management will, speak with the victim and gain consent before reporting the matter to the police.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents/carers

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School, it is not appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's concerns process or formal complaints procedure are much better suited to this.

The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites.

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the School/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments, or any other homophobic comments; threats of

violence

- Uploading or sharing photos or videos taken during an Overley Hall event on social media of any Overley Hall child/learner other than their own.

Parents and carers should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner when in their care. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.

Procedure the School will follow if inappropriate use continues

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately.

As a first step, the School will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Set out the School's concerns in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed
- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory
- Contact the Police where the School feels it necessary

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis and, in accordance with the following, on an as-and-when-required basis:

- legislative changes
- good practice guidance
- case law
- significant incidents reported

Links with other policies

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Equal Opportunity Statement

Mobile Telephones – Personal Mobiles Policy

Staff Code of Conduct.