



ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

Effective Date

September 2014

1. Introduction

1.1 The school is aware, and acknowledges, that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking and online gaming sites.

1.2 The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with our audiences in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly.

1.3 However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our School Community and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. For example, our use of social networking and online gaming applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

1.4 The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation and Schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice.

1.5 This policy applies to all employees of the Future Schools Trust.

1.6 This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking and online gaming sites.

1.7 The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- . that Future Schools Trust, its leaders and governors are not exposed to legal risks;
- . that the reputation of Future Schools Trust, staff and governors at the school are not adversely affected;
- . all children are safeguarded
- . that any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the Future Schools Trust.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy covers the use of social networking sites and all online gaming applications by all Employees, Governors and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the School.

3.2 These groups are referred to collectively as 'School representatives' for the purpose of this policy.

3.3 The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking and online gaming applications which are used for personal or any school related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not.

3.4 They must also be considered where School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking and online gaming applications provided by external organisations.

3.5 Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, MSN, You Tube.

3.6 Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

3.7 All School representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking and online gaming applications, even if they are in private messages, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School Equality and Safeguarding Policies.

3.8 School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the school community to any personal social networking sites while in employment at Future Schools Trust.

3.9 Any communication received from children to School Representatives must be immediately reported to the Designated Child Protection Co-Ordinator and procedures for safeguarding followed.

3.10 If a School Representative is made aware of any other inappropriate communications involving any child and social networking or online gaming. These must be reported immediately as above.

3.11 School internet policy must be used at all times when children use ICT and access the internet in school.

4. Use of Social networking and online gaming sites in work time

4.1 Use of social networking and online gaming applications in work time, for personal use only, is not permitted.

5. Social Networking as part of School Service

5.1 All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Principal first.

5.2 Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Principal. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

6. Terms of Use

6.1 The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.

6.2 Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Future Schools Trust expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

6.3 School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use:

Terms of Use

Social Networking and online gaming applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns except with the permission of a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- No staff member should have any current pupil of any age, or a former pupil under the age of 18, as a 'friend' to share information with
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Principal.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.

6.4 Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

7. Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking and online gaming

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking or online gaming sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking or online gaming sites, who is under the age of 18
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Principal in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment and the Terms of Use as detailed above must be adhered to.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child
- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking or online gaming sites in the working day, please contact the Designated Child Protection Officer in school

8. Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking and online gaming sites

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites.
- No pupil may access social networking or online gaming sites during the school working day
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Principal. Parents will be informed if this happens.
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking or online gaming sites at any time of day.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision
- We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying

9. Enforcement

9.1 Any breach of the Terms of Use could result in the application or offending content being removed in accordance with the published complaints procedure and the publishing rights of the responsible School representative being suspended.

9.2 The Trust reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by School representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the School or put it at risk of legal action.

9.3 Any communications or content you publish that causes damage to the School, the Trust or any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the School Disciplinary Policy will apply.

9.4 Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

9.5 The Trust expects that users of social networking or online gaming applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

10. Related Documentation

Complaints Procedure
 Safeguarding Policy
 Equality Policy
 Internet Policy in School

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September 2014

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Date