



## Social Media Statement

Social media (for example, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. Some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft, and video sharing platforms such as YouTube, also have social media elements to them. Barnes Primary School recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying, personal reputation and/or school reputation.

This statement aims to encourage the safe and responsible use of social media by Barnes Primary School, its staff, governors, parents and carers and children so that in particular the confidentiality of pupils, staff and other school stakeholders and the reputation of the school are safeguarded.

This statement:

- applies to all staff and governors and to all online communications which, directly or indirectly, represent or reference the school;
- applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere;
- encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through education and training where appropriate; and
- details the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.

The school respects privacy and understands that staff, governors, parents and carers and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this statement. The school would prefer that it is not the subject of any personal social media posts and/or comments but, in the event that it is, this statement provides the necessary guidelines.

**Professional communications** are those posted on a school account. All professional communications are within the scope of this statement.

**Personal communications** are those made by staff or governors via a personal social media account or one which associates itself with the school.

Where a personal account or one which associates itself with the school (for example, but not limited to, year group or event group chat) is used, and comments posted are associated with the school or might have impact on the school, such personal communications are within the scope of this statement. Personal communications which are not associated with and do not impact on the school are outside the scope of this statement.

### Organisational control

#### Roles & Responsibilities

- Headteacher
  - Developing and implementing the Social Media Statement;
  - Ensuring staff are familiar with this Social Media Statement by providing a link to school policies and statements;
  - Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents;
  - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required;
  - Approving new school social media account creation.

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- IT Technician
    - Creating the account following Headteacher approval;
    - Storing account details, including passwords, securely;
    - Being involved in monitoring the account;
    - Controlling the process for managing a social media account after a staff member with posting rights has left the school (including closing or transferring accounts);
    - Removing access to any school social media account after a staff member with posting rights has left the organisation (closing or transferring).
  
  - Staff
    - Knowing the contents of this statement and ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with its terms and those of any other relevant school policies;
    - Attending appropriate training as/when required.

#### Process for creating new accounts

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a music department Twitter account, or a “Friends of the school” Facebook page.

Staff must consider the following factors before discussing the creation of social media accounts with the Headteacher:

- the aim of the account;
- the intended audience;
- how the account will be promoted; and
- confirmation that the account will be private/closed.

#### Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. The school’s social media accounts must be one-way and any comments made in response to a school posting must not be visible to the public. However, any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 5 working days even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to proactively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school. The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others if appropriate and as agreed by Headteacher, Business Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Any relevant comments noticed by staff or governors on any platform should be forwarded to the Headteacher and/or Business Manager and/or Chair of Governors to discuss and respond to as appropriate.

#### **Conduct**

The school requires that all staff and governors making professional or personal communications, as defined above, on social media adhere to the standards of conduct as set out in this statement and other relevant policies.

##### a) School social media accounts

- Digital communications by staff and governors must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this statement.
- The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:
  - engaging
  - conversational
  - informative
  - friendly

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- Any offensive comments received should be handled swiftly and with sensitivity.
  - Users should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
  - Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws.
  - Users must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media.
  - Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts must not be made in relation to school activity.
  - Users must not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others, or make ill-considered comments or judgments about members of the school community or school procedures.
  - School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain.
  - Social media must not be used for actions that would put employees in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff, or governors in breach of their code of conduct.
  - Unacceptable conduct (for example, but not limited to, defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality or copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
  - The school's use of images on school social media sites can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:
    - permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's data protection policy and if anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed their wishes should be respected;
    - staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts (pupils should be appropriately dressed and not be subject to ridicule): and
    - if a member of staff inadvertently uploads a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.
  - If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff should seek the advice of the Headteacher, Business Manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) before responding.
- b) Personal social media accounts
- Where a personal account or one which associates itself with the school (for example, but not limited to, year group or event group chat) is used, and comments posted are associated with the school or might have impact on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff or governor is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer.
  - Staff and governors are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils of the school on any personal social media network account.
  - Staff or governors must decline any 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. If a member of staff receives such requests, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official school sites. If a governor receives such requests, they should advise the Headteacher, the Business Manager or a member of the SLT.
  - On leaving the school's service and/or governing body, staff or governors must not contact pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
  - Under no circumstances should staff or governors share or upload pictures of pupils online other than via school-owned social media accounts.

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- Staff and governors must ensure that confidentiality on school stakeholders or school matters is maintained, even after they leave the employment and/or governing body of the school.
  - If any conversation that involves the user's relationship with the school becomes offensive or unacceptable in their personal social media accounts, users should block, report other users or delete or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken. The matter should then be reported to the Headteacher, Business Manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
  - If a member of staff feels that they are, or someone else is, subject to abuse by a colleague or other school stakeholder through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported to the Headteacher, Business Manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
  - The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and is considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
  - Staff should be aware that, if their out-of-work activity on social media causes potential embarrassment for the school or local authority or detrimentally affects the school or local authority's reputation, be that through infringing the rights and privacy of others or making ill-considered comments or judgements about school stakeholders or school policy and statements, then the school or local authority is entitled to take disciplinary action.

## **Education**

### a) Pupils

- The school's education programme should enable pupils to be safe and responsible users of social media, including adhering to the minimum recommended age for each Application.
- If pupils are using social media, it is expected that they comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy or IT acceptable use policy.

### b) Parents and carers

- The school has an active parent and carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website and workshops led by digital experts.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to be respectful at all times if they must post or comment about the school.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to direct any complaints or concerns on any matter through the school's official channels or via the appropriate member of staff, rather than airing them on social media, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure.
- In line with the school's ICT and Internet Acceptable Use statement, and in order to ensure the school can improve and address issues in a constructive and appropriate way, parents are advised that they must not:
  - use private groups or personal social media to complain about or criticise members of staff or campaign about or criticise school methods, policy or procedures;
  - use private groups or personal social media to complain about, or try to resolve, a behaviour issue involving other pupils; or
  - upload or share photos or videos on social media of any child other than their own, unless they have the permission of the other child's parents/carers.

The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media statement. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies (including Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) where appropriate) and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

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**Status**

Reviewed by: Pay & Personnel Committee

Last Review: June 2021

Next Review: Summer 2023 (and biannually thereafter)