Heatherside Infant School – Social Media Policy

POLICY TYPE	COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE	APPROVED	REVIEW CYCLE	NEXT REVIEW
Safeguarding	FGB	October 2026	Annual	Autumn 2027

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of school's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

Staff, students and parents/carers are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and pupils
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of the school should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

1.1 Definition of social media

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp.

2. Use of official school social media

The school maintains an official Facebook page for marketing purposes, celebrating achievements, and sharing school updates. Access to this account is restricted to authorised members of the administration and senior leadership team.

Content published on the school's social media channels must be appropriate, accurate, professional, and consistent with the school's values and policies, including safeguarding, data protection, and confidentiality requirements.

Photographs, videos, or information relating to pupils will only be shared where appropriate consent has been obtained and in accordance with the school's data protection procedures.

The school reserves the right to remove comments or content posted by members of the public that are offensive, abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, misleading, or otherwise inappropriate.

Login credentials for official social media accounts must be kept secure and must not be shared with unauthorised individuals.

The joint Parent Teacher Association for Heatherside Infant and Junior Schools operates a Facebook page and WhatsApp group. These platforms are managed independently by the HSA and do not represent the views of Heatherside Infant School unless explicitly stated.

3. Personal use of social media by staff

The school expects all staff (including governors and volunteers) to consider the safety of pupils and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

When using social media, staff **must not**:

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate with, pupils past or present
- Complain about the school, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of pupils
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school
- Link their social media profile to their work email account
- Use personal social media during timetabled teaching time

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff behaviour policy.

Any communication received from current pupils (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should not also do not have contact via personal accounts with past pupils (if ongoing communication is required, this should be using via official school channels).

The children in our school are too young to have their own social media accounts e.g. on Instagram or Facebook and if they did and were to contact staff then this should be disclosed to both the headteacher and the parents as a safeguarding matter. Many members of staff are also members of the community and/or are parents of children in the school, and as such may be friends online as well as in real life with parents. This is not banned, but staff should not make friends online with parents with whom they do not have a relationship outside of school. Staff should not refer to any school-based incidents or anecdotes on their social media.

4. Personal use of social media by parents/carers

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about the school, individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- Share confidential, sensitive or inappropriate information relating to the school, its staff, pupils or families
- Use social media to speculate about, discuss or identify individuals involved in safeguarding, behavioural, disciplinary or welfare matters
- Post photographs, videos or identifying information about pupils (other than their own child) without the appropriate consent of the parent/carer concerned
- Make defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, intimidating, threatening or harassing comments about the school community
- Incite conflict or encourage others to make complaints via social media rather than through the school's procedures

- Tag the school, members of staff or pupils in inappropriate content

The school may take appropriate action where online behaviour has a negative impact on the welfare of pupils, staff or the wider school community. This may include requesting the removal of content, restricting communication channels where appropriate, and, in serious cases, referring matters to the relevant authorities or seeking legal advice.

4.1 WhatsApp groups

Any class WhatsApp groups are set up and administered by parents and the school has no responsibility for these. However we do expect parents/carers to follow the above social media guidelines when using class WhatsApp groups, and where content is brought to the school's attention that raises safeguarding concerns or constitutes bullying, harassment, discrimination or other inappropriate behaviour, the school may take action in accordance with its relevant policies and procedures.

Parents/carers should be aware that messages, photographs and other content shared within WhatsApp groups can be copied, forwarded or shared more widely. They should therefore exercise care when sharing information and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all members of the school community.

5. Monitoring and review

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The headteacher will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

6. Related policies

- Child protection and Safeguarding policies
- Acceptable use policy
- Behaviour policy
- Staff code of conduct and low level concerns policy