

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Rationale

With the widespread availability and use of social media applications there are opportunities to engage and communicate in new and exciting ways. However, it is important to ensure that we balance these opportunities with our legal responsibilities, our need to protect the reputation of the school and most importantly our duty to safeguard children and adults in our school community.

This policy sets out to protect young people and the reputation of the school. Any conduct by a member of staff that uses social media to harm either a young person or the reputation of the school would be deemed to be in contravention of this policy.

The policy requirements outlined below aim to:

- Protect the school from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected
- Safeguard all children
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school.

Definition of social media

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper site.

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

All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, 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's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.

The Policy

- Any communication received from students on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection.
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above.

- Members of the school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts.
- All email communication between staff and members of the school community on school business must be made from an official school email account.
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the school community, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.
- Staff are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts.
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts.
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.

The following are not considered acceptable:

- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.

Staff must ensure that they:

- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal/professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.
- The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Acceptable use of Social Media

- Use of the official school blog and twitter sites.
- Blogs that relate directly to GCSE and A level courses.
- Sites currently supported by RM Unify platform.

Personal Blogs and Websites

If staff use their personal blogs to discuss their Larkmead School work, they must ensure that confidential information is not revealed. This might include aspects of school policy or details of internal school discussions.

Staff members are free to talk about their work at Larkmead School in the interest of sharing good practice and promoting the work of the school but should be mindful of the principles stated at the start of this document.

Blogs or websites which are purely about personal matters and do not identify the blogger as a Larkmead School employee or do not discuss the School will normally fall outside this guidance. However, personal blogs and websites should not be used to attack or abuse colleagues or students. Staff members should respect the privacy and the feelings of others. If a staff member is contacted by the press about posts on their blog that relate to the school, the head teacher must be consulted.

Review

This policy is to be reviewed every 12 months by the Student Welfare sub-committee of the Governing Body.

5th September 2016