



GEORGE ABBOT SCHOOL

Policy Title:	Social Media and Internet Code of Conduct
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Committee Responsible:	GLAC
Governor Lead:	Jackie Thompson
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School Mission Statement: Academic excellence within a strong community of equality and respect, where potential and opportunity are realised.	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school.

1.2 This policy applies to the George Abbot School governing body, all teaching and other staff, external contractors providing services on behalf of the school, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as “staff members” in this policy.

1.3 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

1.4 It is essential that pupils, parents and the public have confidence in George Abbot School. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly and the internet so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school are safeguarded.

2 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to any social communication platform and personal web spaces including (but not exhaustive)

Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram)

Content Sharing Sites (YouTube, Flickr)

Blogging Sites (Twitter, Tumblr)

Chatrooms

Podcasts

Open access encyclopaedias (Wikipedia)

Private Messaging Apps (WhatsApp, Texting)

Gaming Platforms (Xbox Live, PSN, Steam)

Video Games (Minecraft, League of Legends)

External Sites with communication functionality

Online Forums & Message boards (Reddit)

Personal Email (Excluding school email)

The internet changes quickly and it is impossible to list ever type of communication online. The content within this policy must be followed irrespective of medium.

3 Legal Framework

3.1 George Abbot School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

3.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by GDPR
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

3.3 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

3.4 George Abbot School could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render George Abbot School liable to the injured party.

4 Related Policies

4.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

5 Principles

5.1 Staff must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school and your personal interests.

5.2 Staff must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring George Abbot School into disrepute.

5.3 Staff must not engage in activities involving social media which conflict with Part Two of the Teaching Standards.

5.4 Staff must not represent your personal views as those of George Abbot School on any social medium.

5.5 Staff must not discuss personal information about pupils, George Abbot School staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.

5.6 Staff must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, George Abbot School.

5.7 Staff members must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating online web space and social media accounts.

6 Use of Social Media

6.1 Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from George Abbot School or any other school, unless the pupils are family members.

6.2 In the case of family members staff should use a separate social media account to ensure their personal information cannot be seen by other students their child may be friends with.

6.3 All contact with ex-students is encouraged to be done through the school email system and official school sites.

6.4 Staff should avoid contact through any personal social medium with any ex-student to reduce the risk of current students having access to the information of staff members through their friends who are still at school. The school recommends that for at least three years after the ex-student has left George Abbot staff use school and use school email to communicate with any ex-student.

6.5 Staff members should avoid having any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media to reduce the risk of current students having access to the information of staff members through their children who are at school.

6.6 If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school and through official school accounts.

6.7 Staff members must decline "friend requests" from pupils they receive on their personal social media accounts.

6.8 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues and other parties and school corporate information must not be discussed on their personal web space.

6.9 Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school uniforms or clothing with school logos or images identifying sensitive school premises must not be published on personal web space.

6.10 School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

6.11 Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as

the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

6.12 George Abbot School corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal web spaces.

6.13 The School advises caution when inviting work colleagues to be "friends" in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites can blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.

6.14 Staff members must set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy.

6.15 Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.

7 USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF GEORGE ABBOT SCHOOL

7.1 Staff members should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and should be linked to an official school email account.

7.2 Staff members can only use official school sites (The school's email system) for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

7.3 Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through school social media accounts where the message is not public

7.4 There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating School Social Media accounts to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

7.5 Official school sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements (this is often set at 13 years which would exclude year 7 & 8). Staff members must also consider the ramifications and possibilities of children under the minimum age gaining access to the site

7.6 Staff members participating in social media for work purposes are expected to demonstrate the same high standards of behaviour as when using other media or giving public presentations on behalf of George Abbot School.

7.7 Staff members must consider how much time and effort they are willing to commit to the proposed site. They should be aware that maintaining a site is not a one-off task, but

involves a considerable time commitment. As such unused sites or accounts should be deleted to ensure they are not neglected creating a potential risk to the school's brand and image.

7.8 All official school social media accounts must be accessible by more than one member of staff and private messaging functionality should not be used except when conversing with other professionals.

7.9 Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

7.10 Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents/carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts

7.11 Any abuse of school-sanctioned social media (through either staff involvement or a compromised account) should be reported to the DSL, Online Safeguarding Coordinator or SLT and recorded for safeguarding purposes. Any offending material must be deleted and if necessary the account removed. Screenshots should be created prior to deletion in order to maintain evidence in cases where breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of George Abbot School has occurred.

8 MONITORING OF INTERNET USE

8.1 George Abbot School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

8.2 Users of George Abbot School email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system

Any incidents that conflict these rules should be reported to the Head

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with George Abbot School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A potential breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of George Abbot School or any illegal acts or acts that render George Abbot School liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.