Social Media Policy

St Katharine's Knockholt Church of England (VA) Primary School

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KEY DETAILS

Designated Safeguarding Lead (s): Sarah Jane Tormey Head DSL

Xanthe Veneziani Head DSL

Named Governor with lead responsibility Jonathan Kearley

This policy will be reviewed **at least** annually. It will also be revised following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

1. POLICY AIMS AND SCOPE

- This policy has been written by St Katharine's, involving staff, children and parents/carers, building on the Kent County Council LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service Social Media policy template, with specialist advice and input as required.
- It takes into account the Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'(WTSC) 'Behaviour in Schools Advice for headteachers and school staff' 'Mobile Phones in Schools' 'Preventing and Tackling the Bullying and Harassment of School Staff' 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school', and the local Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership (KSCMP) procedures.
- The purpose of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members of St Katharine's community when using social media.
    - St Katharine's recognises that online safety is an essential part of safeguarding and acknowledges its duty to ensure that all children and staff are protected from potential harm when using social media.
    - As outlined in our child protection policy, the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), Sarah Jane Tormey and Xanthe Veneziani have overall responsibility for online safety.
- The policy applies to all use of social media; the term social media includes, but is not limited to, blogs, wikis, social networking sites, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and messenger apps or other online communication services.
- This policy applies to children, parents/carers and all staff, including the governing body, leadership team, teachers, support staff, external contractors, visitors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of the setting (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy).

2. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

- This policy links with several other policies, practices and action plans, including but not limited to:
    - Anti-bullying policy
    - Acceptable Use Policies (AUP)
    - Behaviour and discipline policy
    - Cameras and image use policy
    - Child protection policy
    - Home-school agreement / parental code of conduct

- Staff code of conduct/behaviour policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Complaints policy
- Curriculum policies, such as: Computing, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Citizenship and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- Data security
- Mobile phone and smart devices

3. GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA EXPECTATIONS

- St Katharine's believes everyone should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. Even though online spaces may differ in many ways, the same standards of behaviour are expected online as offline, and all members of our community are expected to engage in social media in a positive and responsible manner.
- All members of our community are advised not to post or share content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others on any social media service.
- We will control/monitor and restrict learner and staff access to social media via our filtering and monitoring systems which are applied to all school provided devices and systems; further information on how this is achieved is addressed in our child protection policy.
- The use of social media or apps, for example as a formal remote learning platform or education tool will be robustly risk assessed by the DSLs / headteachers prior to use with learners. Any use will take place in accordance with our existing policies, for example, child protection, staff/learner behaviour acceptable use policies, remote learning Acceptable Use Policy .
- We expect members of our school community to use social media responsibly and respectfully. Concerns about the school, it's staff or children should be raised through the published procedures wherever possible. Online conduct that is abusive, harassing, threatening, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate may be addressed in line with relevant policies and procedures and, where appropriate, reported to external agencies.

  Concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of St Katharine's community on social media will be taken seriously. This includes concerns relating to online complaints, harassment, intimidation or abuse directed towards staff, children or other members of the community. Concerns will be managed in accordance with the appropriate policies, including anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour, home school-agreements, staff behaviour/code of conduct, Acceptable Use Policies, and child protection.

4. STAFF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is not permitted for staff during working hours but reasonable use is allowed in designated staff areas during authorised breaks. .
- Safe and professional online behaviour is outlined for all members of staff, including volunteers, as part of our staff code of conduct/behaviour policy and acceptable use of technology policy.
- The safe and responsible use of social media sites will be discussed with all members of staff as part of their induction. Staff play a key role in creating an environment where children feel safe to discuss their online experiences and report concerns. Advice will be provided and updated via staff training and additional guidance and resources will be shared with staff as required on a regular basis.

- Staff should be mindful of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence tools and automated features, and must not use these in ways which could compromise confidentiality, professional standards or the safety and wellbeing of children.

4.1 Reputation

- All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within the school . Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or institution into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.
- Members of staff are advised that content shared on social media may be widely viewed, copied or redistributed beyond their control. All members of staff are therefore advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media. This may include, but is not limited to:
    - Setting appropriate privacy levels on their personal accounts/sites.
    - Being aware of the implications of using location sharing services.
    - Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
    - Logging out of accounts after use.
    - Using strong passwords.
    - Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as being that of the school.
- Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of St Katharine's on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information being linked with the setting and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- All staff are expected to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance with our policies and the wider professional reputation and legal frameworks, for example, the Teacher's Standards. All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post on social media.
- Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about children and their family members or colleagues, will not be shared or discussed on social media sites.
- Members of staff will notify the leadership team and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately if they have concerns about content shared online which may impact their role, the setting, or the safety and wellbeing of children.

4.2 Communicating with children and their families

- Staff will not use any personal social media accounts to contact children or their family members. This is to maintain clear professional boundaries and safeguard both children and staff.
- All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add any current or past children or their family members, as 'friends' on any personal social media accounts.
- Any communication from children and parents/carers received on personal social media accounts will be reported to the DSLs/headteachers.

- Any pre-existing relationships or situations, which mean staff cannot comply with this requirement, will be discussed with the DSLs/headteachers. Decisions made and advice provided in these situations will be formally recorded to safeguard children, members of staff and the setting.
- If ongoing contact with children is required once they have left the setting, members of staff will be expected to use official setting-provided communication tools eg school email accounts.

5. OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

St Katharine's official social media channels are
https://www.facebook.com/StKatharinesKnockholt?locale=en_GB.

https://www.instagram.com/stkatharinesknockholt/.

- The official use of social media sites by St Katharine's only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives and with specific intended outcomes and once the use has been formally risk assessed and approved by the headteachers prior to use.
- Official social media sites are suitably protected and linked to our website.
    - Official social media channels have been set up as distinct and dedicated accounts for official educational or engagement purposes only.
- Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including but not limited to anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality and child protection.
- All communication on official social media platforms by staff on behalf of the setting will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny. Public communications on behalf of the setting will, where appropriate and possible, be read and agreed by at least one other colleague.
- St Katharine's will ensure that arrangements are in place to monitor and moderate comments, messages and interactions on official social media channels where these functions are enabled.
- Parents/carers and children will be informed of any official social media use, along with expectations for safe use and action taken to safeguard the community. Parents have to opt in and give consent for this.
- Parents and carers will be informed of potential official social media use with children. Any official social media activity involving children will be moderated if possible and written parental consent will be obtained as required.
- We will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.
- Members of staff who follow and/or like our official social media channels will be advised to use dedicated professional accounts where possible, to avoid blurring professional boundaries.
- If members of staff are managing and/or participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the setting, they will:
    - Read and understand our Acceptable Use Policy.
    - Where they are running official accounts, sign our social media Acceptable Use Policy.
    - Be aware they are an ambassador for the school .
    - Be professional, responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
    - Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.

- Follow our image use policy at all times; for example, ensuring that appropriate consent has been given before sharing images.
- Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the setting, unless they are authorised to do so.
- Not engage with any private or direct messaging with current or past children/pupils/students or their family members.
- Inform their line manager, the DSL (or deputy) and/or the headteacher/manager of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from children.

- Any planned use of social media or online platforms with children for educational purposes will be risk assessed and appropriately supervised.

5.1 Use of images

- The use of photographs, videos and livestreamed content featuring children, staff or other members of the school community will be undertaken in accordance with our image use policy, data protection requirements and safeguarding procedures.
- Before publishing images on social media, we will consider whether the content is necessary, proportionate and appropriate, taking account of safeguarding, privacy and potential online risks.
- We will not routinely publish unnecessary identifying information alongside images, such as full names, personal details, locations, routines or information which could increase the risk of an individual being identified or targeted.
- We recognise that images shared online may be copied, redistributed, manipulated or misused, including through the use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. We will take reasonable steps to minimise risk when selecting, storing and sharing imagery.
- Where images or recordings are shared via official social media channels, this will take place in line with the school's consent processes, image use procedures and data protection requirements.

6. CHILDREN'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- St Katharine's recognises that the use of social media by children presents opportunities for learning, entertainment and participation. However, it can also bring safeguarding risks, including exposure to harmful content, contact from unknown individuals, abuse, and pressures linked to online interactions.
- The use of social media during school hours for personal purposes is not permitted for children in line with safeguarding, behaviour and curriculum considerations.
- While much online behaviour takes place off-site, outside of the school day, we will work in partnership with parents/carers, who play an essential role in ensuring children's safe use of technology.
- We take a contextual safeguarding approach to online behaviour and recognise that children's experiences outside the setting, including online, can have a significant impact on their safety and wellbeing. Where behaviour online poses a risk of harm to a child, impacts the safety or wellbeing of members of the community, or could affect the running or reputation of the school, we will respond in line with our behaviour and child protection policies.
- We recognise that age restrictions for social media and online services vary depending on the platform and are subject to change as legislation and regulatory expectations evolve. We will not create accounts for children who do not meet the required age thresholds set out by the relevant service provider and current legal or regulatory requirements.

- We recognise that, regardless of age restrictions or setting expectations, many children and young people will continue to access or be exposed to social media and online content. We are committed to ensuring that all children feel safe, supported and able to talk to safe adults about their online experiences, including any concerns, worries or incidents, without fear of blame or automatic sanction.
- St Katharine's will empower our children to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to use social media and online services (including emerging features and technologies) in a safe, considered and respectful way. Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to children as part of an embedded and progressive safeguarding education approach using age-appropriate sites and resources. Further information is contained within our child protection and relevant specific curriculum
- Children will be advised:
    - to consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details or information on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
    - to only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others, for example by making profiles private.
    - not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other appropriate adults' permission, and to only do so when a safe adult is present.
    - to use safe passwords.
    - to use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
    - how to block and report unwanted communications.
    - how to report concerns on social media, both within the setting and externally.
    - how to report concerns within the school, including speaking to a safe adult or a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Any concerns regarding children's use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with appropriate existing policies, including anti-bullying, child protection and behaviour.
- The DSLs (or deputy) will respond to social media concerns involving safeguarding or child protection risks in line with our child protection policy.
- Sanctions and/or pastoral/welfare support will be implemented and offered to children as appropriate, in line with our child protection and behaviour policy. Civil or legal action may be taken if necessary.
- Concerns regarding children's use of social media will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly where there are safeguarding or age-related concerns.

7. RESPONDING TO POLICY BREACHES

- St Katharine's recognises that online abuse, bullying, harassment or intimidation of staff is unacceptable. Concerns involving harmful, abusive or threatening online behaviour towards staff by pupils, parents/carers or members of the wider community will be taken seriously, recorded as appropriate, and responded to in line with relevant policies and procedures, including behaviour, complaints, staff conduct, safeguarding and, where appropriate, police reporting processes. St Katharine's expects all communication, including communication via social media, to be respectful and constructive.

- Concerns relating to photographs, videos or other images shared via social media, including inappropriate sharing, unauthorised publication, misuse, manipulation or the use of artificial intelligence to create, alter or generate imagery, will be taken seriously. The school will respond in line with safeguarding, child protection, data protection and behaviour procedures. This may include removing content where possible, recording concerns, supporting affected individuals and seeking advice from, or reporting concerns to, external agencies where appropriate.
- All members of the community are informed of the need to report policy breaches or concerns in line with existing policies and procedures. This includes: child protection, whistleblowing, safeguarding and behaviour policies
- After any investigations are completed, leadership staff will debrief, identify lessons learnt and implement any policy or curriculum changes, as required.
- We require staff, parents/carers and children to work in partnership with us to resolve issues.
- All members of the community will respect confidentiality and the need to follow the official procedures for reporting concerns.
- Children, parents and staff will be informed of our complaints procedure and staff will be made aware of the whistleblowing procedure.
- If we are unsure how to proceed with an incident or concern, the DSLs (or a deputy) or headteachers will seek advice from the local authority or other agencies, as appropriate, in accordance with our child protection policy.

8. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

- Technology evolves and changes rapidly. St Katharine's will review this policy at least annually. The policy will be revised following any national or local policy updates, any local concerns and/or any changes to our technical infrastructure.
- We will regularly monitor internet use taking place via our provided devices and systems and evaluate online safety mechanisms to ensure that this policy is consistently applied. Any issues identified will be incorporated into our action planning.
- All members of the community will be made aware of how the school will monitor policy compliance