Part 5: ICT Policies – Social Media and Communication Policy

Note: This policy should be read in conjunction with other ICT policies and the Behaviour Policy

Aims

The school's primary aim is for each Parmiterian to be self-assured and caring, an active and well-rounded citizen with integrity, who respects others and contributes to society. Our school ethos and aims and our Behaviour Policy also reiterate our commitment to:

- creating a healthy, happy, disciplined and supportive environment which promotes an independent work ethic and a love of learning;
- engendering respect for individuality and difference so that all will feel secure and equally valued;
- nurturing a sense of social responsibility and spiritual and personal development;
- fostering integrity, confidence, resilience, creativity, good manners and sensitivity to the needs of others.

We acknowledge that all members of the Parmiter's family may access social media sites and recognise the professional and personal benefits of these technologies. However, we are aware of the need to ensure the safety of our students and staff at all times as well as preserving our school's reputation. This policy sets out the principles that Parmiter's staff, governors and students are expected to follow when using social media and real-time communication applications.

Definition and Role of Social Media

When referring to social media, we are referring to any tool, application, website or mobile technology that allows people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos online. This includes e-mail.

Parmiter's acknowledges the role of social media in increasing opportunities to learn and communicate. The school has a number of 'official' social media accounts that allow us to use real-time communication to keep the school community informed of news and events. We also acknowledge the increasing use of personal social media by all members of the Parmiter's family.

Parmiter's Social Media Principles of Acceptable Use

Matters posted on to social media sites have the potential for considerable breadth of dissemination and individuals choosing to post on such sites should be mindful of this.

Nothing should be posted onto a social media site that could be considered as victimising and or humiliating to someone on account of their race, gender, religion, nationality, culture, disability or sexual orientation. Users must refrain from posting anything that is disrespectful to individuals, obscene, sexually explicit, inappropriate, inflammatory or defamatory towards the school or any person.

Parmiter's therefore expects that the online contributions of students, staff and governors are polite and non-offensive.

Parmiter's Social Media Acceptable Use Policy Regulations:

When posting material onto social media sites students, staff and governors should be conscious at all times of the need to keep their school/professional life and personal life separate.

As such, students, staff and governors must not:

- Put themselves into a position where anything posted might bring Parmiter's into disrepute.
- Represent their own personal views as those of Parmiter's on any social media sites.
- Post any narrative that could be considered either implicitly or explicitly as insulting, threatening, harassing, illegal, abusive, obscene, defamatory, slanderous, or hostile towards any individual or towards the school.
- Discuss or post personal or confidential information or images relating to students, any member of staff or any other member of the Parmiter's family.
- Allow any other individual or entity to use their identification for posting or viewing comments.
- Post comments under multiple names or using another person's name.

It is recommended that staff and governors do not:

- Have current students as 'friends' on any personal social media account and are discouraged from having former students as friends.
- Have any communication received from students on any personal social media site. Any such communication must be reported to the designated person for child protection.

In addition students, staff and governors should follow the following guidelines:

- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any student in any social media, these should be reported as above.
- Members of the whole school community are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts.
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with students, nor should any such contact be accepted except in exceptional circumstances. Any such contact should be reported to the e-safety officer.

All users of social media and communications should be aware of Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 detailing offences relating to the 'Improper use of public electronic communications network':

1. A person is guilty of an offence if he—
   a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
   b) causes any such message or matter to be so sent.

2. A person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he—
   a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message that he/she knows to be false,
   b) causes such a message to be sent; or
   c) persistently makes use of a public electronic communications network.

(Communications Act 2003. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/section/127. Accessed 09/04/15)

Students will not be able to access social media with age limits on the school network and are discouraged from doing so through private networks before they turn 13. e-Safety, the importance of a safe and positive online profile and regulations regarding various social media sites are covered in curriculum time.

All information posted on a Parmiter's official social media site or any 'open' social media site will be publicly available and therefore publicly accessible on the Internet. All members of the school community using any social media site should be aware that their name may appear next to any information posted and could be linked and

traced accordingly. Comments posted which are considered to contravene any school policy and which can be traced to a member of the school community may be subject to disciplinary action.

All material posted onto a Parmiter's official social media site becomes the property of Parmiter's. Individuals posting comments or materials onto Parmiter's official media sites lose all subsequent rights to this material which may be disseminated by the school in whatever way it decides. Parmiter's reserves the right to delete comments from Parmiter's official social media sites and will take all reasonable steps to have offensive material removed from other websites on behalf of their students and staff or in order to preserve the reputation of the school.

Monitoring

Misuse of social media and all communication facilities can have a detrimental effect on other users and potentially the school's reputation. As a result;

- Any communication received which is regarded as inappropriate, illegal or offensive should be reported to a member of SLT immediately.
- The school maintains the right to access any school e-mail and/or social media accounts as part of an investigation authorised by the Headmaster, Deputy Headteacher Leader of ICT.
- The school possesses the right to monitor and search any social media for references to Parmiter's and its community.
- The school reserves the right to redirect the school e-mail account and reassign any Parmiter's social media accounts of staff that have left. Users are responsible for ensuring that personal e-mails are stopped.

Action as deemed appropriate may be taken by the Headmaster if there is evidence that any school policy has not been adhered to.

Sanctions for breaches of the Social Media and Communication Policy

Any breach of this policy, or an online action which breaches any other school policy, may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Given that inappropriate or irresponsible use of social media or online communications can have a seriously detrimental effect on the individual(s) involved, extending to their professional reputation and that of the school, it should be recognised that any of the sanctions detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy may be applied. The specific disciplinary sanction imposed will depend on the seriousness of the incident and repeat offending may result in a more serious sanction.

Below are extracts from the school's Behaviour Policy which reiterate the importance of responsible use of social media and communication.

➢ **Bringing the school into disrepute**
- Students are expected to be good ambassadors for the school at all times. Bringing the school into disrepute may result in a range of sanctions from simple loss of privileges to exclusion from school.

➢ **Offensive conduct to other students**
- Use of electronic means to harass, alarm or distress ("cyberbullying"), such as by e-mail, website, social networking sites, social media or text message, comes within the remit of this policy and will lead to a sanction.

➢ **Offensive conduct to members of staff**
- Abusive language/rudeness to or defiance of a member of staff is very serious. A member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed immediately. A student found culpable will receive an internal isolation, or fixed-term exclusion.
- Harassment of a member of staff, abuse of their property or of their family, including beyond the bounds of the school day or school term, is also extremely serious and will result in internal isolation or fixed-term exclusion, or permanent exclusion. Threatening or aggressive conduct, damaging conduct, or repeated misconduct of this sort, are aggravating factors which will make more likely the application of exclusion which may be permanent. If a student is found to have wilfully made a malicious allegation against a member of staff, this will be a very serious offence likely to lead to an exclusion which could be permanent.
- Use of electronic means to harass, alarm or distress ("cyberbullying"), such as by e-mail, website, social networking sites, social media or text message, comes within the remit of this policy and will lead to a sanction.

- ➢ **Offensive conduct to members of the public**
- • Such misconduct, either in word or deed, is always serious. A member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed immediately. A student found culpable can expect a Saturday morning detention, internal isolation, or fixed term exclusion as appropriate.

As per the school behaviour policy's definition of school jurisdiction, 'The school reserves the right to investigate and impose sanctions for any misconduct by any student at any time, beyond the bounds of the school day, week, and term, where such misconduct prejudices the good order and welfare of the school and its students. This includes misuse of social media and poor behaviour which is witnessed by staff or is reported to school by a member of the public.'

The school reserves the right to report, where appropriate, infringements of the Social Media Policy regulations to the Police, as a variety of criminal offences may fall within the definitions of the legal offences.

Further Information & Guidance

Please note that this policy should be read in conjunction with other ICT policies, in particular the Acceptable Use Policy and the e-Safety Policy.

The following documents are also recommended:

Social Media Advice for staff:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf

Social media Advice for Parents:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375420/Advice_for_Parents_on_Cyberbullying_131114.pdf

Guidance for staff on the appropriate use of school e-mail (available in the ICT handbook)

In recent DfE guidance 'Preventing and tackling bullying', the following are cited as further resources related to cyber-bullying and online safety:

ChildNet International: Specialist resources for young people to raise awareness of online safety and how to protect themselves. Website specifially includes new cyberbullying guidance and a practical PSHE toolkit for schools.

Digizen: provides online safety information for educators, parents, carers and young people.

Intenet Matters: provides help to keep children safe in the digital world.

Think U Know: resources provided by Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) for children and young people, parents, carers and teachers.

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) has produced a range of resources for schools, colleges and parents about how to keep children safe online, this includes advice for schools and colleges on responding to incidents of 'sexting.'