



The Newton Group

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An international community of learners striving for excellence and celebrating success



Social Media Policy

Introduction to the Policy

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

The policy document aims to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Our guidelines are designed to create an atmosphere of good will, honesty, and individual accountability. Newton staff should always keep in mind that information produced, shared, and retrieved by them is a reflection on the school community and is subject to the school's policies.

The reputation of the school should not be adversely affected. When accessing, creating, or contributing to any blogs, wikis, podcasts, or other social media for classroom or, in most cases, for personal use, we expect you to keep these guidelines in mind.

Failure to meet or follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all staff and the overall aim is safeguard and protect pupils and staff. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the staff are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube; Snapchat and Instagram
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter
- Chat groups on whatsapp, bbm etc.

All staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, is subject to copyright and data protection.

Use of Social networking sites in worktime

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use is not permitted.

Guidelines

The intent of these procedures is to clarify the professional boundaries to protect you and your pupils from potential misinterpretation of the staff-pupil relationship.

These procedures apply to all social interaction between you and your pupils both during and outside of working hours where a staff-pupil relationship exists.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The Newton Group expects that users of social networking applications will exercise the right of freedom of expression in accordance with these conditions.

Conditions

Social Networking applications

- must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- must not include use of the school name or logos without first attaining permission from the Principal
- must not have any postings by staff within the school day
- must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns

In Addition

- No staff should join any social media group pages as a member or representative of The Newton Group
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Principal and the person concerned
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the school or detrimentally affects the school's reputation then the school is entitled to take disciplinary action

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

As a school staff member, you are subject to a level of public scrutiny over and above most other public sector employees because you work with children. For many of you, web based and other electronic communications are an essential part of your social and professional lives. Using new technologies, whether during or outside working hours, presents significant risks for you.

You should not engage in social interaction with pupils through social networking sites unless there is an educationally valid context. In the event of a complaint or allegation being received by the School/Board, the responsibility will be on you to demonstrate that the use was appropriate.

You have legitimate reasons to use communication technologies as part of teaching and learning programs such as:

- communicating by email with parents and pupils about pupil assignments and progress. In order to be transparent and accountable for communications with pupils and parents, you and your pupils should use school email addresses
- creating applications such as web pages and blogs as part of the teaching programme. You need to ensure you:
 1. obtain informed parent/guardian consent for pupils to use the technology
 2. provide parents with information explaining how the technology works
 3. reach agreements with parents covering the use of social media both at home and at school including an understanding of potential risks
 4. provide opportunities for parents to experience social media
- studying social media as texts in learning areas such as English and media studies. Here the phenomenon of social media is the focus of learning rather than just being the means to achieve the learning. The context, purpose and potential impact of using these applications should always be considered. You must maintain a professional tone in all communications with pupils. These technologies should only be used for teaching and learning programmes and in accordance with school policies

This policy sets clear guidelines and boundaries for appropriate behaviour between you , parents and your pupils by any means, especially out of school hours.

Staff should not :

- interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites
- enter chat rooms with pupils
- exchange mobile phone numbers with pupils for private communication. Sometimes a class or subject WhatsApp group is created for pupil support. In this forum it is acceptable.
- take photographs or videos of pupils without parent/guardian consent
- take photographs or videos of pupils for non-school purposes
- send or exchange images or videos of school staff, pupils or any aspect of school operations without authorisation or approval
- download and store inappropriate images or other inappropriate material on laptop computers outside school hours and off school sites.
- interact with any parents as a representative of the school
- join community or public forums as a representative of the school

Please note :

- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please inform your line manager or Principal
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the school or detrimentally effects the school's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

The Social Media Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis