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## **PRENTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

## 1 SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 The internet provides opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and the sharing of information using a wide variety of social media such as Facebook, X, Instagram, blogs and wikis. However, staff use of social media can pose risk to the School's confidential and proprietary information, and reputation.
- 1.2 To minimise these risks and to ensure that the School's IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, the School expects staff to adhere to this policy.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time through normal negotiation and consultation mechanisms.
- 1.4 This policy is in place to minimise the risks to the School through use of social media. It deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram and all other social networking sites and internet postings including blogs.
- 1.5 It applies to the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the School's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 1.6 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 1.7 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the School's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.
- 1.8 Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation that may follow, which may involve providing access to their social media accounts. Where concerns arise, investigations will rely on publicly available material and lawful evidence gathering processes in line with Data Protection legislation.
- 1.9 Staff will be required to remove within a reasonable amount of time, in line with policy usage (see 5.2), internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action in line with the school Disciplinary Policy.
- 1.10 This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, which ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

## 2 WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

- 2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades throughout the School, including part time and fixed term employees, casual staff, agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).
- 2.2 Third parties who have access to the School's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with policy.

## 3 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY?

- 3.1 The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Governing Body has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating this policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Headteacher.

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- 3.2 The Senior Leadership team and all other managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements. Training will, if required, be provided to facilitate this.
- 3.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Headteacher.
- 3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Headteacher.

#### **4 COMPLIANCE WITH RELATED POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS**

- 4.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any the other policies of the School. If an internet post would breach any of the School's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. You are prohibited from using social media to:
  - 4.1.1 breach any obligations the School has in relation to the duty of confidentiality to its staff, governors and students, both past and present;
  - 4.1.2 breach the School's disciplinary policy;
  - 4.1.3 defame or disparage the School, its staff, governors, students and third parties connected with the School, for example students', parents;
  - 4.1.4 post commentary, content or images that are extremist (a person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action), incitement to violence, sexist, racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, proprietary, harassing, libellous or that can otherwise create a hostile working environment;
  - 4.1.5 breach the School's IT and communications systems policy;
  - 4.1.6 breach the School's Dignity at Work Policy;
  - 4.1.7 breach the School's Equal Opportunities Policy;
  - 4.1.8 breach the School's Data Protection Policy;
  - 4.1.9 breach the School's Anti Sexual Harassment Policy
  - 4.1.10 breach any other laws or ethical standard.
- 4.2 In addition, staff should not make postings in any forums where prohibited social media postings are made by others. If such a posting is made, staff are expected to desist from engaging in such forums in the future.
- 4.3 Staff should not promote social media sites of individuals or groups, or join online forums and groups with individuals, that are known to have views which may be considered extremist (a person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action) in nature. If staff are in doubt, they should speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 4.4 Staff should never provide work related references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. Such references, whether positive or negative, can be attributed to the School and create legal liability for the School accordingly and the individual providing the reference.
- 4.5 If staff breach any of the above policies, they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

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## **5 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 5.1 Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of the School's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems, should this occur staff may become subject to the School's Disciplinary Policy.
- 5.2 The Headteacher may, in specific circumstances, authorise access, or allow use of social media during working time as per section 1.9.

## **6 MONITORING**

- 6.1 In light of the exemption of personal use of social media during working time, the contents of the School's IT resources and communications systems are the School's property. Staff should therefore have no expectation of privacy in any messages, files, data, document or social media post conversation or message transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the School's electronic information and communications systems.
- 6.2 The Governing Body of the School reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, your activities using the School's IT and communication systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities to ensure that rules are being complied with, and for legitimate business purposes. Staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems.
- 6.3 Staff should not use the School's IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential.

## **7 BUSINESS USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 7.1 It is unlikely that any member of staff will be required to speak on behalf of the School in a social media environment, but in the event that they are, they must still seek the approval for such communication from the Headteacher who may require them to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to their activities.
- 7.2 Likewise, if staff are contacted for comments about the School for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they should direct the enquiry to the Headteacher and must not respond without written approval.
- 7.3 The use of social media for business is subject to the remainder of this policy.

## **8 RECRUITMENT**

- 8.1 The School may use appropriate internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where the School does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

## **9 RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 9.1 The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.
- 9.2 Protecting the School's reputation:
  - 9.2.1 Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statement about:
    - 9.2.1.1 the School as an organisation;
    - 9.2.1.2 members of staff, including the Headteacher, Governors, trainees or students;

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### 9.2.1.3 third parties connected with the School, e.g. parents

- 9.3 Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the School's reputation, even indirectly.
- 9.4 If a member of staff discloses their affiliation with the School, they should state that their views do not represent those of their employer. For example, they could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer".
- 9.5 Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf, and not on behalf of the School, its officers or employees. A way to achieve this would be writing in the "first person".
- 9.6 Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media.
- 9.7 Staff should ensure that the content of their postings is consistent with professional image as a member of staff of the School.
- 9.8 If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until they discuss it with the Headteacher.
- 9.9 If a member of staff sees content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the School or any member of staff, they should contact the Headteacher.
- 9.10 Staff should not do anything to jeopardise confidential information of the School, its staff or students through use of social media.
- 9.11 Staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals as this may create liability for both themselves and the School.
- 9.12 Staff should be respectful to others when making a statement on social media and should not post anything that colleagues or third parties would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.
- 9.13 Staff should not post anything related to their colleagues or students without their or their parents written permission and consent. (including consent for use of photographs/videos).
- 9.14 Staff must not have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with students on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family (if a member of staff is found to be in breach of this requirement it will be considered an act of potential gross misconduct and dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Policy).
- 9.15 Staff are strongly advised not to not have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with parents on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family, or the friendship has been formed outside the context of school (children in the same dance class for example). Please ensure that SLT are made aware of the relationship, for full disclosure.
- 9.16 Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards or other governing body or School guidance document.

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