

# **The Cornerstone Academy**

## **Social Media Policy**

**Approved By: Ofsted – Pre-Opening**

**Reviewed by: Cornerstone Local Support and Scrutiny Board**

**Date Reviewed: Summer 2021**

**Date for Policy review: Summer 2022**

## **Introduction**

For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to any interactive Web 2.0 platform, including social networks, internet forums and blogs. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media. Staff should assume that all online activity is covered by this policy. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use, both at work and at home.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to teachers, support staff, governors, volunteers and all who work on the school site. This policy takes account of all the appropriate legislation and sets out to:

- Assist those who work with pupils to work safely and responsibly, to monitor their own standards of behaviour and to prevent the abuse of their position of trust with pupils.
- Offer a code of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal and recreational use.
- Advise that, in the event of unsafe and/or unacceptable behaviour, disciplinary or legal action (including gross misconduct leading to dismissal) will be taken if necessary in order to support safer working practice and minimise the risk of malicious allegations against staff and others who have contact with pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's use of IT policy.

## **Use of social media in the school**

Staff are not permitted to access social media websites from the school's computers or other school device at any time unless authorised to do so by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. However, staff may use their own devices to access social media websites while they are in school, outside of lessons or other structured sessions. Excessive use of social media, which could be considered to interfere with productivity, will be considered a disciplinary matter.

Staff should assume that anything they write (regardless of their privacy settings) could become public so should ensure a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives. Any use of social media made in a professional capacity must not:

- Bring the school into disrepute.
- Breach confidentiality.
- Breach copyrights of any kind.
- Bully, harass or be discriminatory in any way.
- Be defamatory or derogatory.

## **Use of social media outside of school**

The school appreciates that staff may make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, staff must be aware that if they are recognised from their profile as being associated with the school, opinions they express could be considered to reflect the school's opinions and so could damage the reputation of the school. For this reason, staff should avoid mentioning the school by name, or any member of staff by name or position. Opinions should follow the guidelines above so as not to bring the school into disrepute, breach confidentiality or copyright, or bully, harass or discriminate in any way.

### **General considerations**

When using social media staff and others should:

- Never share work log-in details or passwords.
- Keep personal phone numbers private.
- Never give personal email addresses to pupils or parents.
- Restrict access to certain groups of people on their social media sites and pages.

Those working with children have a duty of care and are therefore expected to adopt high standards of behaviour to retain the confidence and respect of colleagues and pupils both within and outside of school. They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information effectively so that it cannot be misused by third parties for 'cyber-bullying', for example, or identity theft. Staff should not make 'friends' of pupils at the school because this could potentially be construed as 'grooming', nor should they accept invitations to become a 'friend' of any pupils. Staff should also carefully consider contact with a pupil's family members because this may give rise to concerns over objectivity and/or impartiality. Staff should keep any communications with pupils transparent and professional and should only use the school's systems for communications. If there is any doubt about whether communication between a pupil/parent and member of staff is acceptable and appropriate a member of the senior leadership team should be informed so that they can decide how to deal with the situation. Before joining the school, new employees should check any information they have posted on social media sites and remove any post that could cause embarrassment or offence.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, such as incidents of bullying or of social media activity causing damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.