



# Lea Valley Primary School

## Social Media Policy 2016/17

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## School Policy on the Use of Social Media

The purpose of an agreed policy should be that employees do not feel gagged, staff and managers feel protected against online bullying, and the organisation feels confident its reputation will be guarded. Once agreed, the employer should ensure all staff are aware of the policy and make clear the distinction between when employees will be seen as representing the organisation, and when they are using social media in a personal capacity. This policy is subject to legal consideration outlined in paragraph 4 below.

### 1. Scope

- a) This protocol applies to all employees, temporary workers and agency workers who are full time, part time, in fixed-term employment or engaged in consultancy work for the school.
- b) It is your own personal choice whether or not you choose to participate in any kind of social media activity in your own time – the views and opinions that you express are your own. The right to a private life is respected by the school, provided it does not adversely impact on the employee's work at the school.
- c) The school encourages its employees to be active citizens in their local community and has no wish to restrict unnecessarily the freedom of employees to engage in social, community or political networks and groups within the Borough. As such, employees are entitled to express views that may not be in line with, or are critical of existing council policies and actions. If an employee is a member of a faith group, a political party, trade union or community group, they should feel able to express their views (including on social media) as long as they are doing so as an active citizen rather than a representative of the employer.
- d) If you are using social media in a personal capacity, in our own time, you are advised to ensure that this use is not perceived as relating to your employment (for example by identifying yourself as an employee). You should consider adding appropriate disclaimers (e.g. 'views expressed here are personal' 're-tweets do not imply agreement') to ensure boundaries are clear.
- e) An individual's use of social media must not contain anything contrary to the school's equality and inclusion policy. You should not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

- f) The school expects employees to ensure that the reputation of the school and its staff are not harmed by employees' words or actions when using social media, subject to the considerations in (a-d) above.
- g) The school's It Policy makes it clear what is acceptable internet use when people are at work and/or using school equipment.
- h) Particular care must be taken when recording electronic images of children and guidance followed as set out in the Child Protection Policy. Personal phones **must not** be used to take photographs of school activities or of pupils. Staff should always use school-owned cameras or tablets if taking photographs of children. Any images should be electronically stored by the school securely, and a senior member of staff should be responsible for this.
- i) Where employees are unsure about whether their use of social media is acceptable, they should discuss the matter with their Headteacher. Equally, if in the course of their work, a Headteacher becomes aware of, and has concerns about, the use of social media by an employee, they should discuss this with the employee, based on (in the first instance) the informal procedures outlined below.

## 2. Responses to Complaints

- a. Consideration should always be given to seek to resolve the matter informally for lesser cases. Except in the most serious cases, or where previous informal action has failed to bring about the desired outcome, Headteachers should always seek first to address any concerns through informal action. These lesser cases may, for example, have arisen from a genuine misunderstanding. The purpose of informal action is to draw the employee's attention to any perceived inappropriate conduct and to provide an opportunity for reflection and remedial action if appropriate (such as a simple apology). In this way employees will be made aware of management's expectations, and employees can establish with their Headteacher where the boundaries actually lie. However, if any aspect of a complaint concerns issues of child protection or abuse these should always be referred to the designated CP member of staff within the school.

### 3. Disciplinary Action

- a) The school expects employees to ensure that the reputation of the school and its staff are not harmed by employees' words or actions online.
- b) If employees are suspected to be engaging in inappropriate conduct which may be in breach of this policy, including where activity happens outside working hours, an investigation will be carried out under the relevant disciplinary policy and procedure. The investigation will establish the nature and the seriousness of the alleged offence.
- c) Online activity which may be in contravention of these guidelines will be addressed accordingly by the Headteacher. It is important that Headteachers should make clear to employees the standards expected, and it is recognised that this will normally be effected through informal action in the first instance.
- d) Headteachers should be aware of the employers' duty to treat employees fairly and consistently in their judgements on the use of social media and should seek advice if they are unsure.

### 4. Legal Considerations

- **The Human Rights Act 1998.** Article 8 gives a qualified 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence' and is directly enforceable against public sector employers.
- **The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000** covers the extent to which organisations can monitor or record communications at the point at which they enter or are being sent within the employer's telecommunications system. It applies to public and private communication networks.
- **The Data Protection Act 1988** covers how information about employees and job applicants can be collected, handled and used.
- **Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992** section/146 which offers protection against detriment when a TU representative is acting as a union official.

### 5. Related Policies

- a) This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Council's other policies. These include, but are not restricted to:
  - **Code of Conduct**

- **Child Protection Policy**
- **Managing Allegations against School Staff**
- **Whistleblowing**